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SOCIETY, SIN
AND
THE SAVIOUR

Leonardo da Vinci. *Franz Hanfstaengl.*

"HE LOVED ME AND GAVE HIMSELF FOR ME."

SOCIETY, SIN
AND
THE SAVIOUR

ADDRESSES ON THE

PASSION OF OUR LORD

BY

FATHER BERNARD VAUGHAN
OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS

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1907

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WESTMONASTERII

die 10 *Sept.* 1907

"High God, and Pure and Strong and Kind!
The low, the foul, the feeble, spare!
Thy brightness in His Face we find,
Behold our darkness there."

E. B. BROWNING.

TO YOU MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS

WHO LIKE ANNAS, CAIAPHAS, PILATE AND HEROD

ARE VAINLY STRIVING TO RID YOURSELVES

AND YOUR COUNTRY OF

JESUS CHRIST,

I DEDICATE THESE SCENES

IN THE HOPE YOU MAY LEARN FROM THEM NOT

ONLY THE MALICE OF YOUR ATTEMPT,

BUT ITS FOREDOOMED FUTILITY.

FOR "KNOW MOST CERTAINLY THAT GOD HATH

MADE BOTH LORD AND CHRIST THE SAME JESUS

WHOM YOU HAVE CRUCIFIED . . . SAYING,

SIT THOU ON MY RIGHT HAND

UNTIL I MAKE THY ENEMIES

THY FOOTSTOOL."

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PREFATORY NOTE

These Addresses are here presented, as far as possible, in the shape in which they were delivered, no attempt being made to re-mould them according to the canons of written rhetoric. For the preacher is persuaded that the congregations that listened, with what at least seemed to be profound interest, did so on account of the home truths they enumerated, regardless of the dress in which they were clothed. Home truths, he ventures to call them, for they seem to him to be those verities in the living, practical acceptance of which consists the putting on the livery, the likeness, nay, the character itself of Jesus Christ, Who for all time is for all Christians their divine Model as well as their divine Master.

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INTRODUCTION

THERE are few points of doctrine upon which men who still call themselves Christians are more at variance than upon that of the Atonement. But the reason is not far to seek. So long as men make little of the essential sanctity of God and of the consequent intrinsic malice of sin, so long they must fail to grasp the real meaning of the Atonement. By some it is contended that sin is only an ugly name for what in reality is a token of health and growth; and that the pain accompanying it is in no sense punishment for wrongdoing, but is rather evidence of a striving for perfection never in fact attained.

Or again, we are assured that in the struggle for the survival of the fittest, in the moral no less than in the physical order, there must be both weak and strong, worse and better; and just as in one order there can be no merit attaching to the fittest who survives, so there can be no guilt attaching to him who goes under in the other. It is all a question of heredity, of environment, of constitution, of character; and God, if there is one, the modern world contends, is no more concerned about our moral wellbeing than He is about our physical health or beauty. "There is no room in

the Heart of God for anger against what theologians call sin"; "There can be no sin in trying to make each other happy."

Seeing that views such as these about sin and its consequences lie at the root of much that is assumed in our novels, magazines, and daily papers, and is acted on by not a few in daily life; and seeing that novels and papers sum up all that men nowadays care to read, a foreword may not be out of place on the true character of Sin and the true meaning of the Atonement.

Sin is lawlessness, deliberate, done with knowledge and freedom. "Whosoever committeth sin," writes the Apostle St. John, "committeth iniquity, and sin is iniquity." Formal sin is a human act deliberately done against the moral law; *it is an iniquitous act.*

Being deliberate rebellion against the law of God, sin is constructive treason against God Himself. Observe, some laws cannot be resisted; they defy man's defiance. Such are the laws of gravitation and of respiration, and the laws of growth and decay.

Again, there are penal laws, which a man may violate whenever he has a mind to do so, but with the penalty of physical suffering to follow. For instance, mental strain unchecked will produce neurasthenia; while too much self-indulgence, as Society can tell you, produces physical disease with its countless by-products.

But besides physical laws there are other and higher obligations to which on this planet man

alone is subject. We call them moral laws. As with the penal laws just mentioned, man is free to keep or to break them; let him set them at defiance, and sooner or later he will become conscious, not only of mental torture, but also of having offended the Lawgiver, upon whom he now altogether depends for forgiveness: "The wages of sin is death."

When a man violates, say by overwork, the laws of health, he recognises that he has done an act for which he must pay the penalty, say of insomnia; but when he breaks the moral law, say the law which forbids him to lie or to steal, he is conscious that he has done a disgraceful and degrading act, for which no amount of sleeplessness in the shape of remorse will atone. There can be no violation of the moral order which does not in some way degrade, while its repetition drags a man down, and down, and down, till finally the habit reduces him to a level below that of the brutes that perish. Well may such a one exclaim:

> "And ah! that a man may arise in me
> That the '*beast*' I am may cease to be!"

No matter by what euphemistic name modernity may label sin, you cannot get away from the hideous fact that Pride and Covetousness, Lust and Anger, Gluttony, Envy and Sloth, with all other moral iniquities, are

> "Horrible, hateful, monstrous, not to be told."

While the follower of Christ longs to free himself of the disgrace, demoralisation, and degrada-

tion of sin, the worldling is satisfied with trying to rid himself of the thought of the ravages and of the publicity of it. Society finds fault with us for living too much under the Shadow of the Cross, but not without reason we blame it for basking too much in the glare of day. And we do well to remind Society, that it is not so much in the sunshine of prosperity as in the dark chamber of adversity, that Christ's likeness in the soul is developed into a perfect picture.

To members of Society the one great evil in life is physical pain; to the followers of Christ, on the contrary, the only real evil is moral pain—sin. With the Psalmist the Christian cries out to God: "Against Thee only have I sinned and done evil in Thy sight"; "Wash me yet more from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin"; "*My sin is always before me.*"

Christianity is the one and only religion which paints sin in its true colours, and which with uplifted crucifix forces the sinner to sink to his knees, reminding him that *it is an evil and a bitter thing to offend God.*

Now comes the question: Is there any cure for this evil? Does God forgive sin? If so, how far does that forgiveness reach? Is it a mere sentiment or a real act? Is God's pardon akin to the feeling of compassion which a judge may show to a criminal, even while he is compelled to pass sentence of death? Or is it a deliberate sentence remitting the penalty of death by removing the guilt of the culprit?

We know that God's forgiveness is a real act of pardon restoring the penitent to favour. We know, as well as the Apostle St John knew, that "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Just, and He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for our sins only, but also for the sins of the whole world." We know there is such a thing as sin, and such a thing as its forgiveness.

It is to revelation and not to reason that we are indebted for the doctrine about "the forgiveness of sins." To the superficial observer it may indeed seem quite natural that sin should be pardoned, and that the stain of sin, if any there be, should pass away with time and be forgotten. But to any man who will try to fathom the depth of sin's iniquity, or, which is the same thing, to gauge the height of God's sanctity, there will seem to rise up before him objections wellnigh insuperable against the teaching about the pardon of sin. Are not laws relentless and pitiless? They are deaf to all appeals for mercy. No matter how eloquently we may plead, fire will burn, frost will chill, blows will hurt, war will wound and slay. And so it would seem that without a miracle—and that, we are assured, "of course never happens"—not even the most penitent sinner who has violated any law, physical or moral, need look for absolution.

Again, God is not only the Author of Law, He is also the Ruler of Society. What would be thought of the head of a State who, provided an

offender expressed himself contrite for his outrages against it, at once relented and proposed to release, and not to convict him? Similarly it may be asked: Is God to be considered so indifferent to the moral law, so easy and indulgent, that He will surely relent and forgive when pressed to do so by the drunkard, the gambler, the sensualist, the assassin, or the infidel?

Take the doctrine of forgiveness of sin; examine it from any point of view you like, and you will find that apart from revelation the difficulties against it are unanswerable. We are forced back upon some such text as the following from St John: "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Just; and He is the propitiation for our sins."

In a preface I cannot pretend to exhaust the full meaning of this passage, but let us at least draw from it the pregnant truth that in some real sense Jesus Christ is the "propitiation for our sins," and that but for Him there would be no positive sanction for the doctrine of the forgiveness of sin.

What is the Scriptural meaning of the expression, "propitiation for our sins"? It means, as any Biblical student will tell you, the remission of the sins of men by the sacrifice of the Cross. When we assert that Christ made satisfaction for us, we declare that He took our cause upon Himself, and in our place He made full compensation for the injury done by us to God when we sinned. St Cyril of Jerusalem thus puts it: "God had

declared that death should be the punishment of sin. Therefore one of two things must be done; either God, to be consistent with Himself, must destroy the race of man, or He must make use of clemency and remit the sentence. But here was the wisdom of God displayed: He preserved the force of His decree, even while He gave full vent to His goodness. Christ assumed sin in His body on the Cross, that by His death we who were dead in sin might live to justice."

But He not only made satisfaction, He also won us the grace of repentance. "He suffered," as St Clement of Rome puts it, "to win for the world the grace of penitence." But not without conditions on the part of man himself; and the first of these is the recognition of the loathsome state into which sin plunges the sinner. And here again His Passion makes the condition much more easy, for there is no sight like the Cross to bring home to us what a hateful thing is sin. Hence the instinctive hatred of the Cross in the sin-seeker. It is to the Cross that we look for the source of our cleansing contrition; just as it is to the Cross that we point as to the Great Charter of our deliverance from the servitude of sin to the freedom of the children of God.

"O Crux! ave spes unica."

In other words, Christ's propitiation was offered to the Eternal Father as a most perfect act of penitence, so as to merit for us the grace of forgiveness and reconciliation.

"God was in Christ," says St Paul, "reconciling the world to Himself."

Jesus Christ chose to become the great Penitent of mankind—"He was made sin," is the daring description of St Paul—and He offered, not for His own sake, not indeed only for mere abstract right and justice, but for our sake and for our salvation, "that perfect good thing to God," which, St Thomas says so well, "more than repaired the evil wrought by sin." "He offered Himself." "Christ loved me and gave Himself for me." "For us men and for our salvation He came down from heaven." "For our sakes also was He crucified under Pontius Pilate."

But let us not forget that "Christ is indeed our Advocate with the Father," and "the propitiation for our sins," but this is not because the Father is reluctant to forgive and to save us. The Advocate is the Father's own provision. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son"—at the impulse of His own infinite mercy—"to be the propitiation of our sins."

God wants us to hate sin with Him, and to see with our own eyes what an evil it is, and so we look up to see Incarnate Love—bleeding, agonising, dying to atone for sin.

Our Lord's motive in laying down His life was not only to satisfy justice, but to provide for fallen man the best means of restoration to the grace and favour of God. For the satisfaction of justice a single breath of His life would have sufficed; for the satisfaction of love His life's-blood

poured out was all too little. We cannot too often repeat this beautiful and consoling doctrine concerning Christ's propitiation, insisting again and again that it was a perfectly willing sacrifice of self in order to restore wayward children to a most loving Father, by winning back for them as their high Representative that life of Grace which went under and was lost in the struggle with that soul-destroying fiend, sin. "Faithful is the saying and worthy of all acceptation," writes the Apostle, "that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners."

Sin is alienation from God, the Fountain of Living Waters, the Fountain of Life, the Fountain of Eternal Light, the Source of Wisdom and Knowledge, the Torrent of Delight, as St Bonaventure calls Him. So terrible even in this life are the consequences to the sinner of his mad act, that God, with the picture of it before Him, seems to lose sight of the gross insult which it offers to His own Person. Hence when He speaks of sin by the mouth of His prophet He dwells especially on the disasters it occasions in the sinner's own soul: "Leaving Him, the Fountain of Living Waters, and digging cisterns which can hold none." Does not our own experience bear out the truth of this text? Say what we may, we know that by sin we go away from God rather than that God goes away from us. It is our own act; the alienation is on our side. What percentage of our people go to no place of worship on the day set apart for praise and rest! It is not that God

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leaves them; it is they that deliberately go away from Him. They abandon the Fountain of Living Waters, and dig for themselves cisterns that can hold none. Yes, seven out of every eight persons in this Christian land leave Him and His temples for recreation and pleasure on Sundays. Surely the straight and simple explanation of the feverish unrest which to-day is so conspicuous among all sections of the community—among the wage-earning, the shopkeeping, and the leisure-gifted classes alike—is none other than that already told us by God Himself.

We are trying the impossible—trying to find meat in husks and drink in sieves. With reason is the daily press flooded with letters under the title, "We are tired of Society as at present constituted." As creatures of God, how could we be otherwise? Is not the social organism suffering from a malignant growth which can be cured by no Physician but One? And yet He is passed over for the self-asserting quack, whose loud mouth bawls through this Babylon that he has discovered the secret of healing the evils within by readjusting the circumstances without!

That our social system with its attendant circumstances is out of gear no one will care to deny. For instance, can it be otherwise than criminal to allow the alien into our household, that he may snatch the bread from our poor brothers and sisters who have no room wherein to breathe, and no food on which to live, and no work in which to sweat, unless it be the

sweated industries themselves? Fortunate is many a poor girl who can get five paltry half-pennies for making a gross of match-boxes; fortunate her brother who can earn ninepence for making a pair of boots; and even of this beggarly pittance a sum must be subtracted for paste and string, for rivets and grindery. Well do I remember a sweated shirtmaker who, when I told her how grieved I was at not seeing her at all at church on a Sunday, answering me with tears running down her pinched and furrowed face: "Well, Father dear, after working all the week nearly sixteen hours a day to keep a bit of roof over mother's head and mine, by the time Sunday comes I scarcely know whether it 's myself or the machine I have put to bed." How can we pretend to sit quiet and be satisfied with this state of things? I have taken but one instance. Multiply it a million times, and you will have some faint idea of what those are enduring to whom the gospel of Socialism is being preached to-day.

Can we be surprised if the proletariat rises up asking its leaders when they are going to lead it westward for air, clothes, and food?

And yet, believe me, it is not by converting all the pieces on the chessboard into pawns that the game of life is to be played. Rather it is by persuading bishop, knight, and the rest to fulfil with intelligence and charity the duties which their respective positions on the board demand of them. Socialism is not a constructive but a destructive theory of life. Play the game, and play up.

The present chaotic state of the world, with armed neutrality at best between capital and labour, could never exist if Christ and His Christianity were our rule of life. All is wrong without, because nothing is right within. We have shouted as the Jews did of old: "We will not have this Man to reign over us." We have with them trampled on the Blood of our Saviour; and in return—is it not true?—we ourselves are now being financed and dominated by them—

"And we gave the Cross when we owed the Throne."

By our sins we have turned away from Christ the Lawgiver and have brushed aside His laws. We have, I repeat, trampled on the Blood of Christ, and have torn to pieces the Sermon on the Mount; we have abandoned Him, the Fountain of living waters, and have dug for ourselves cisterns which can hold none. Oh if we did but know the gift of God!

We, calling ourselves a Christian people, are suffering from a virulent disease—apostasy from Christ,—and unless we recognise the fact and come back to Him, how can it but be woe for our boasted Empire? Surely it is better to reap with Christ than to glean with Ruth.

What may serve even more than the testimony of the prophet to bring home to us the true character of sin is our Lord's description of it in the Parable of the Prodigal. There the misguided youth is represented as going away from his father and his home into a far country, and

there "wasting his substance living riotously." Observe the awful change that takes place when the Prodigal has left his well-ordered house for the riot of fast society. He goes from bad to worse; till finally we find this exquisite, for whom once nothing was sufficiently refined, now herding with swine, thankful to be allowed to feed with them from the same swill-tub of husks and garbage.

Meanwhile, what does our dear and blessed Lord say about the boy's father? Does He describe him as turning his back upon his child, and as being so angered by the personal insult offered Him that when the right moment shall come he will crush and ruin him? Not so; on the contrary, in this most beautiful and most wonderful of all wonderfully beautiful parables, our beloved Master tells us that the father, instead of brooding over the wrong done to himself, is altogether absorbed in the thought of his son's wretchedness and misery. He feels—

"This beaten way thou beatest, I fear is hell's own track,
This downhill path is easy, come turning, hasten back."

Indeed, when the boy after much self-conflict does resolve to return and fling himself upon his father's mercy, that father is presented to us as hurrying forth with flying feet to meet and clasp him in the everlasting arms.

Nay, more; so overjoyed and even overpowered is the heart of the father by the return of the spendthrift son, that in answer to his pleadings for mercy he can do nothing but repeat to

himself again and again: "My son was dead and is come to life; he was lost and is found."

With the Parable of the Prodigal before us, how can any one venture to speak of the Atonement as "a device of the Only-begotten Son to check an angry Father from flying at us"? or as "an instance of an angry Father punishing an innocent Son"? It was not *anger* but *love* that devised the Atonement. "God so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son; that whosoever believeth in Him may not perish, but may have everlasting life." Nor is sin an offence against the Father only. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, being one and the selfsame God, sin cannot be more displeasing to one Person than to another. It is the same offence against the Son as it is against the Father; and the mercy which supplies the Atonement as well as the Justice which demands it, are the Mercy and the Justice of all three Persons alike. To borrow the fine saying of St. Leo: "One is the kindness of their mercy as the sentence of their justice, nor is there any division in action when there is no diversity of will."

What would I not give to see my own prodigal brothers and sisters in English Society returning like the wastrel described by our dear Lord to their Father?

Is not the life of fast Society to-day a real riot —lawlessness, iniquity?

I know it is contended by some that my charges

against the *vulgar rich* were unfounded, or, at any rate, grossly exaggerated. Would to Heaven they were right and I wrong! Unfortunately I can only reaffirm that the section of Society to which I refer resembles to the life the Prodigal Son, in every phase of his life but his contrite and humble penitence.

Not only does it leave its Father's house, going to a far country, as far removed from God as hell from heaven, but there it wastes its substance in riotous living, caring for nothing else but a free indulgence in the Seven Deadly Sins. What does it seek in the library but sensation, slime, and sin? What in the theatre but costume, crime, and cosmetics? What in conversation but frivolity, flattery, and filth? What from its own members but licence, luxury, and lust? To those who call in question my deliberate statement, I refer to the lists of divorce, decrees of nullity, judicial separations, and other legal dissolutions of marriage published in the criminal and judicial statistics. And if the figures relating to deeds of separation mutually arranged were available, I should cite them more than the rest in support of what I know to be true.

Divorce has been called "the luxury of the rich"; and cases of divorce in the United Kingdom have increased fifty per cent. during the last quarter of a century. There is no need to refer to what is commonly known of that terrible sin crying to heaven for vengeance, which sets at defiance God and His will in regard to the mul-

tiplication of the human race. It would seem that, compared with some of us, the unclean animals are purity itself. Nor is there any occasion for my giving an advertisement to some authors who, knowing the gross appetites of an ever-expanding Society circle, have during the past season flooded our bookstalls with the filthiest stuff that was ever flung into a swill-tub.

Again, I dare not shock my readers by citing the appalling computed statistics in regard to infant mortality. Suffice it to say that, roughly speaking, their death-roll mounts up to one-fourth of the total of deaths in the year. But I cannot refrain from reminding them of the godless way in which so many of the children who do happen to be born in the lap of luxury are trained. Why, the very bloom and fruit in our conservatories receive more consideration than they! They are permitted to run wild from their birth; and before schooldays are reached they have learned to lie, to swear, to gamble, and to do worse. The home bringing-up of England's children is the despair of schools and colleges. What is all this but Society playing the Prodigal, wasting its substance, living riotously! It is for ever intending to do better; but, infirm of purpose, it does nothing. Well may we write for its epitaph:

> "It revelled under the moon,
> It slept beneath the sun,
> It lived a life of going to do,
> And died with nothing done."

The following scenes from Our Lord's Sacred

Passion I offer to Society, in the hope that the contemplation of them may awaken in its soul a yearning to return, if it be but as a hired servant, to its Father's house.

Of one fact be sure, that God our Father is yearning, as never did an earthly father yearn for his one and only child, for the home-coming of penitent Society. Through the merits of Jesus Christ our Elder Brother, who has done so much to win for you, by His atoning Passion and Death, the grace of penitence, let us plead for the speedy return of Prodigal Society to the Eternal Father, from whose lips, when once again folded most lovingly in His arms, it too shall hear: "You were lost and are found; you were dead and have come to life again."

If there be any single one among my dear countrymen who, after meditating on the true character of Christ's Atonement, will say he cannot accept the doctrine—

> "Upon the ground
> That in the story has been found
> Too much love! How could God love so!"

I will answer him: "But, Friend, God could not help it; 'God is Love.'"

BERNARD VAUGHAN, S.J.

P.S.—Only too pleased shall I be to try and help any brother seeking at my hands *spiritual* direction or advice.

114 MOUNT STREET, W.,
Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, 1907.

The Passion of Jesu Christ confounds the fiend: it destroys his deceits and his snares: it slackens fleshly temptations: it clarifies the mind to covet only Jesu Christ's love.

Fasten in thine heart the memory of His Passion: I wot nothing that shall so inwardly take thine heart to covet God's love, and to desire the joy of heaven, and to despise vanities of this world, as stedfast thinking on the hurts and the wounds, and on the death of Jesu Christ. It will raise thy thought above earthly pleasure, and set thine heart burning in Christ's love, and purchase into thy soul delightability and savour of heaven.

By one who felt
"Christ's Heart so hot-loving."

SCENE I

CHRIST BEFORE HIS FATHER

CHRIST BEFORE HIS FATHER

"Father, if Thou wilt, remove this chalice from Me, nevertheless *not My Will but Thine* be done."—St Luke xxii, 42.

Borne upon the wings of imagination let us transport ourselves to the city seated on the hill Jerusalem. The sun is down when, the hymn being sung, Our Lord, accompanied by the eleven, leaves the supper-room, and begins to make His way, through the crowded narrow streets, in the direction of the Fountain Gate lying South East of Zion. Once beyond the noise and glare of the city, garrulous by night as by day during the Paschal week, the disciples, full of strange forebodings, press closely round their Divine Master. And so together they go towards the deep ravine, past the gardens of Ophel, past the Jewish burial ground, down to Siloam, where, leaving Gehenna and the Hill of Evil Counsel on the right, they soon reach the narrow wooden bridge spanning the historic Kedron.

Crossing the brook, big with the rains of early spring, they turn to the bridle-path hugging the eastern bank and going northward. See them — follow them, this timid little flock clinging fearfully to the Good Shepherd—alas! on His way to lay down His life for His sheep.

Under the guidance of the light of the Paschal moon, onward they press, they know not whither, nor do they dare to ask. Presently the ruins of Solomon's temple to the false gods fling lengthening shadows across their path; and now that other temple built to the honour of the One, true God, stands out, on the opposite bank, before them. Strangely, sadly beautiful it looks, springing up white as a vision of heaven out of the richly wooded terrace of Moriah, and tracing an outline of supreme loveliness against the western sky. Alas! it too, along with the city that knew not the time of its visitation, is before long to be beaten flat to the ground like the "abomination of the Ammonites" already in ruins on the hill opposite. But the little company of disciples with Jesus is in no mood for reflections such as these. Their hearts are too heavily

laden with sadness for speech, so in the brooding silence broken only by the sullen voice of the dreary stream, they walk straight on till the western slopes of Olivet dotted with yellow Jewish tombstones break into view before them.

They have reached the point where their pathway meets the road leading to Bethany. Is the Master, they wonder, going to take them there? No, Jesus has come to His journey's end.

On the right, almost directly facing the Gate Beautiful there is a garden, some eighty paces square, called Gethsemane. It lies under a cluster of olive trees whose silver-lined foliage forms a net-work through which the moon is shining in chequered light upon the dewy, green grass of spring. Pausing here with His hand upon the wicket-gate opening into the garden, our blessed Lord having cast one long sad look upon the Temple turns to His anxious disciples, and addressing eight of them, He says tenderly, "Sit you here, till I go yonder and pray." Oh! how they wish He had not said it. They cannot bear the thought of the wrench of parting from Him. Perhaps something will happen to Him in His

absence; had He not Himself said that very evening that the Shepherd would be struck! Is it to be this very night? They know not; their eyes fill as they watch Him stealing away from them into the darkness. In obedience to His wishes they sink to their knees, struggling hard to awaken the spirit of prayer. Meanwhile our Lord taking with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, passes into the enclosure and is soon lost to sight among the trees.

Reverently and devoutly let us in spirit follow our dear Lord with these three disciples, who, having already had the privilege of being witnesses to their Master's transfiguration and glory on the mountain, are now to see Him in His humiliation and agony in the garden.

Behold Him, your Saviour, with His most intimate friends. Casting aside all restraint He begins to reveal to them the tide of trouble that is rising in His soul. Great as a sea is His grief. They fix their gaze upon Him, they listen, holding their breath. How ashy pale He looks, what a weight of sadness is in His eyes and on His lips. See, too, how tremulous they are with emotion as He struggles to say to them: "My soul

is sorrowful even unto death." Then quickly He passes on to add: "Stay ye here and watch with me." They stay, they stand, they watch, but pray they cannot. The echo of the word: "One of you is about to betray Me," keeps beating its dull thud into their ears like the sound of the passing bell, sending into their hearts as though the hand of death were already on them an icy chill of agonising fear. Meanwhile Jesus tears Himself away from them, going, as it were, a stone's throw, whence He passes into "the Valley of the Shadow."

"He began," says St Mark, "to fear." Deliberately putting aside the defences of the Divinity, the Son of Man bares, so to speak, His bosom, presenting His Heart as a target to the poisoned shafts of the children of men, and to the fiery darts of the wicked one.

As thus He stands alone, under the trees, forecasting the troubles, the trials, the torments, and the tortures that are so soon to fasten upon Him, to pierce Him through and through Body and Soul, He becomes unnerved, He reels, totters and falls. The three see Him falling upon His face, nay, falling "flat upon the ground" over-mastered by the

vision of that terrible tragedy to close on the morrow with its death-scene in shame on Calvery.

Here let us pause to ask ourselves, what is the meaning of this strangest of all strange sights? Do our eyes deceive us? Is that white figure outstretched yonder in agony on the green grass beneath the trees, the figure of Christ, the Son of the Living God? Is this the strong Son of Man Whom in His boyhood days we saw among the doctors of the Temple at His ease, fearless; Whom in the springtide of His youth we watched heedless of the death with which the Pharisees and others were wont to threaten Him? Can strength then be afraid, can courage be timid? "Art Thou," I exclaim with St Laurence Justinian, "the Lord of Hosts and yet fearful?"

Can it, I ask you, really be fear—the emotion which we usually associate with unmanly cowardice—that has fastened upon the Son of Man, flung Him to the ground, and left Him there as one struck by God—a criminal condemned to some ignominious death? Yes, He Who never before has felt what fear was, not even when His own townsmen at Nazareth attempted to murder Him;

He Who till this moment has always looked forward to His passion so longingly, Who has always spoken of it so joyfully, declaring Himself to be straitened till it was accomplished, is now, when in the Garden this night, alone, so completely overcome, so utterly undone by the mere thought of it, that it seems impossible that He can ever rise to face and endure its realities.

Why does our Saviour permit this sense of fear thus to attack, seize, and fling Him on His face upon the ground? "*Oblatus est quia Ipse voluit.*" He permits it, because He is resolved, as the Apostle reminds us, to be in all things like unto us. He cannot bear to think that there should be any cup of bitterness offered at any time to the lips of others, which He Himself has not previously drained to its deepest dregs. Accordingly as He lies along the grass in mental torment, there pass in vision before His Soul all those tortures of body and of soul which are, in later days, to test the loyalty and love of His followers. How is the Master to ask His servants to face all these trials, saying, "Fear not, little flock; why are ye fearful, O, ye of little faith," or, "Fear not them

that kill the body," unless He Himself, in His own flesh, has first felt what fear is, and has Himself already robbed the sword of its sharpness, the rack of its fierceness, and shame of its bitterness?

And so "He begins to fear." He permits fear to seize upon Him, and to spend its fury on that nature which He assumed for our sakes. The vile kiss of the betrayer He feels like a blister upon His sacred lips; the servant's cruel blow is already stinging like a stab upon His cheek; from His back the scourge is even now tearing to shreds His sacred flesh, the sharp thorns of the mock crown are actually piercing His brow, while iron nails are burning like fires in His hands and His feet. But Jesus reckoned little of these tortures to His highly organised body; it is His human Soul that most of all appeals to us for pity. To be jostled and jeered by an infuriated mob of His own countrymen; to be rushed through four mock trials, in which injustice and cruelty, perjury and blasphemy are to vie with one another for mastery; to be pronounced free of crime and yet to be scourged with the lash; to be judged innocent of fault and yet to be sentenced to death — this out-

rageous handiwork, this miscarriage of justice it is, which seems almost more than even He, who came to suffer for us, can undertake to endure. And yet, terrifying almost to stupefaction as these gross injustices appear to be as they come leaping upon Him like a mob of fiends let loose from Hell; yet what are they after all when set beside the agony to His Sacred Heart, as our Lord contemplates the ingratitude, the insult and ignominy He is about to experience from those for whom, during the past three years, He has devoted and spent Himself, and who owe to Him a debt which not even service expressed in terms of sacrifice could repay?

There, as He lies stretched upon the ground, His face buried in His hands, Jesus hears the yells of His own people clamouring for His blood. Young men and old, to whom He has been an eye, a foot, a tongue, and an ear, are rending the air with the savage cry, "Crucify Him, crucify Him;" mothers, with infants at the breast, and little ones clinging in fear to their skirts, are screaming themselves hoarse with the curse, "His blood be upon us and upon our children;" worse still, He can hear the tramp of

priestly feet rushing to and fro, like fiends among the people, urging them to yield not but to hunt Him down, to tear Him to pieces, to do Him to death. But what most of all dismays and terrifies His Sacred Heart is the part which His own disciples will play in this awful tragedy—the story of their desertion and flight ; and then, the cowardly denial of one, and the treacherous betrayal of another ; all this is borne in upon Him with such appalling definiteness and minuteness, that as He looks it in the face it unnerves Him, and sends such an acute thrill of agonising fear through His whole frame that at last there breaks from His heart the reluctant cry, "Father, if Thou wilt, remove this chalice from me ; nevertheless, not My Will but Thine be done." It is as though He would say, "Father, if this blasphemous tragedy about to be enacted is too deeply stained with blood, too heavily charged with guilt for this assumed nature to bear, hold it back, hurl it aside, stop its fulfilment : yet 'Thy will, not Mine, be done.'"

Shaken with fear, broken with agony, the Man of Sorrows with difficulty rises to His feet, and turning to the spot where

He left His beloved three, He draws near to them seeking comfort. Alas! James, with his mantle drawn closely round him, lies under the tree where Jesus had left him, and there too is John with Peter, all sleeping heavily. Softly approaching the last named, the Master wakes him, saying, "Simon, sleepest thou? couldst thou not watch one hour?" then without waiting for an answer He addresses all three of them, saying appealingly, almost plaintively, "Watch ye and pray that ye enter not into temptation." Then, seeing them pained and ashamed of their conduct, He adds, in order to mitigate that pain, to relieve their shame, "the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh weak."

Jesus again withdraws a stone's throw from them, uttering and pondering in His heart the word, "I looked for one to grieve together with Me, and there was none, and for one to comfort Me, and I found none."

"And now He begins to be heavy," says St Mark. By this expression, the Evangelist, I take it, means to imply that there now comes over our Lord a sense of weariness, or sickness, nay, of revulsion, almost of disgust. Is He not

kneeling as a sinner in the presence of the Father all Holy ; has He not made Himself responsible to the justice of that Father for the whole mass of sin which lies like a mouldering blight upon the world ; has He not taken upon Himself the rôle of the penitent, and must He not atone for the whole weight of guilt ; nay, for each particular sin of sinful humanity ?

Yes, our divine Saviour has chosen to become the Victim of sin, and its weight of guilt is actually bearing down upon Him, beating Him to the ground, flat as a ripe harvest field under a pelting storm driven by the gale. See Him, lying there, drenched, so to speak, through and through by this sin torrent, while God's anger, like a dark cloud charged with thunder, is hanging over Him.

What a piteous sight is this ! From the north and the south, from east and west the gathering storm of sin rolls up, discharging its torrent of filth upon our dear and blessed Lord. "Hopes blighted, vows broken, lights quenched, warnings scorned, opportunities lost, the innocent betrayed, the young hardened, the penitent relapsing,

the aged failing, the sophistry of misbelief, the wilfulness of doubt, the tyranny of passion, the canker of remorse, the wasting force of care, the anguish of shame, the agony of disappointment, the sickness of despair." Yes, these with all other forms and species of sin are being poured out upon Him; the whole brood of sin "more numerous than the plagues of hail, and flies, and frogs, that were sent against Pharaoh," is actually let loose by the avenging hand of God and is well-nigh breaking the Heart of His Son doing penance. They fasten upon Him, spend their fury on Him, sending their virulent poison through all the pores of His being, till every sense and nerve and fibre of His sacred Body, and every faculty, power, and emotion of His adorable Soul seems to Him to be steeped in sin, saturated with sin, reeking with its abomination, just as though He had been plunged body and soul into some loathsome cess-pool, lying in the fiery stench of hell itself.

The divine Victim raises His bowed Head, and fixing His gaze upon His own quivering limbs, He seems to ask Himself; "These hands so red with

blood are they Mine own; these eyes and these ears, this mouth and these lips, are they what they cannot be, the instruments of the culprit and not of the Victim; this mind so heavily weighted with ghastly burden, this bosom so sorely charged with heartbreaking oppression, and this conscience so torn with anguish and remorse, are they the faculties of the Sinner or of the Penitent?"

Oh! what an awful moment is this, when sin, when every kind and species of sin clings so closely to our divine Lord and presses so heavily upon His Sacred Heart that there is drawn from it the cry; "Oh! Father, if this chalice cannot pass, except I drink it; Thy will be done;" as though He would say, "If this foul leprosy cannot be healed and cleansed, except I bear it in My own Person, and My own blood wash out its stains, Thy will be done."

Having offered this great act of contrition, the divine Penitent once again rises from prayer seeking a little human sympathy from the three friends so dear to His Sacred Heart. Alas! for a second time they had been overcome by sleep, for their eyes, like their hearts, were

heavy. Sadly He stands before them, till a sense of His sacred presence awakes them, and then because, as St Mark observes, "They know not what to answer Him," the indulgent Master spares their feelings, and withdraws to pray the third time.

"He began," says St Matthew, "to be sad." There steals over and into the sacred Soul of Jesus a sense of prostration and desolation, a sense of disappointment and despondency, of anguish and agony; a state of soul altogether distinct from that sense of the fear and of the heaviness through which but now we saw Him pass.

Do you ask me what it is that causes our Lord's Soul to be sad and sorrowful, even unto death? Surely you will say the thought of the loyalty and love of that army of Christian martyrs, of that troop of virgin heroines, of that company of untiring confessors who in the near future are to spring into being as the fruit of our dear Lord's blood-shedding, must drive away all sadness, even as the presence of the sun breaking from the clouds will, as so often we observe, drive away rain from the mountain, mist from the river, fog from the city. Yes, it is

so, but while the vision of His friends supports and encourages Him, the sight of the luke-warm, and of the indifferent, of the negligent and the ungrateful, depresses and saddens Him even unto death.

Do not, then, for a moment imagine, that it costs our dear Lord little to meet and to bear the withering blast, the cruel storm, driven into His Sacred Heart by the coldness, the indifference, and personal hatred that are only too often returned to Him, in exchange for the wealth of His love shown in His sacred passion.

Come nearer, draw closer to Him, and for a moment fix the eyes of your souls upon the sacred person of your loving Redeemer, as He lies struggling to live under this dull, dead weight, like one buried under an avalanche of snow.

You yourselves some of you, perhaps, have known what it is for a mother to have lost the love of an only child on whom she doted ; or you have read of the agony of a man, come home from service to his country abroad, to find the love that was once pledged to him at God's altar, a love pure and strong as a mountain torrent, now diverted from its legitimate channel, rushing in its wild

mad career like a fiery, muddy, volcanic stream whither it should not. Alas! are not the ways of life littered with broken pledges?

But what are these and all other stories gathered from the cruel experiences of Society life, compared with the torturing agonies, burning like a blast of hell, in the Heart of the Son of God as He follows the history of fast Society turning from Him, their only God, to feed on husks and garbage like the beasts which perish?

Turn your eyes to Him, look at Him. He is bowed to the earth by the scorn of men, which like a sand-storm of the desert rises up against Him and swoops down upon Him, covering Him over and searching Him through, burning up the very sources of His life.

As there He lies under this torturing burden, with His sacred face buried in the grass, Jesus is struggling in prayer, straining every nerve of His sacred body, and putting forth every power of His human soul, pleading for strength and courage to bear the dull dead weight of despairing sadness which is pressing upon the fires of His Heart's unquenched and unquenchable love.

In His ears He seems to catch the echo of the word of the betrayer, *ad quid perditio haec*, to what purpose is this waste? Yes. Why should I, He seems to ask Himself, for the sake of those who despise and malign Me, waste My energies, waste My mercies, waste My blood, and waste My life? *Quae utilitas in sanguine meo?* What is the use of spilling My blood for those who do not appreciate it? Why should I supply a copious redemption for those who will not accept it, why die for those who do not care to live?

As these and kindred thoughts strike in upon the Soul of Jesus, He feels His Heart well nigh breaking, and death, like a dark cloud, is hanging over Him. Yes, darkness like a pall seems to cover Him. He is broken, crushed, His very utterance is choked. Ah! see! His precious blood is actually forcing itself away from its appointed channels, seeking release from His over-weighted Heart through the pores of His skin. It trickles down His sacred face, it dyes His snow-white garments to redness, falling in red beads like jewels upon the green grass. He is in agony, and being in an agony, He prays the longer, offer-

ing up His spilt blood for all creatures made to the image and likeness of God, for all the members of His mystical body, who are bone of His bone, blood of His blood, and flesh of His flesh; for all the ministers of His bride the Church; nay, for you, Society sinners, who forfeiting your privileges, bartering your rights, trampling on His blood, despise Him; like Annas treating Him as an impostor; like Caiaphas, as a blasphemer; like Herod as a fool; like Pilate as a fanatic. Listen! hear Him; there is breaking from the sacred lips a prayer: "Abba, Father, all things are possible to Thee, take away this chalice from Me, but not what I will, but what Thou wilt." This strong cry startles the drowsy three who at a stone's throw distance from Him are half slumbering. They wake and gaze—amazed by the awful sight they see, and the words they hear. They watch Him in the attitude of prayer. His garments dyed red clinging closely to Him, while His hands are outstretched as though grasping at something. A preternatural light seems to envelop Him, and as they bend forward, straining their eyes to see, the vision of an angel stands out under the

dark trees ministering to His failing strength, as though offering Him a chalice which the divine Victim drains, holding it between His Hands. Yes, drains to its very dregs! *Calicem quem dedit mihi Pater, non bibam illum?*

And now for a moment let us turn from the Garden of Gethsemane, where we have been contemplating our Lord's estimate of sin, and let us ask ourselves, what does Society, as we know it to-day, think of this thing, which brought about that very agony? If we are to judge Society's estimate of sin by the literature in which it delights, the parties it gives, the scenes it watches, and the plays it frequents, we are forced to one painful conclusion. The fact is, we are living in a day when the typical votary of pleasure regards sin as a relic of a bygone superstition. The very idea of it is not only ignored by some, but by others it is even ridiculed. Society has made a discovery, and, we are glibly told, that in reality there is no such thing as sin! It is merely "a nervous structure," a "growing pain," while conscience should be treated like "a bad dream," which the sooner we throw off and forget the better. We are

assured that, just as we do not blame a brother because he is suffering from curvature of the spine, or shortness of sight, weakness of heart, or other physical ailment, so we must not blame one who is incapable of uttering the truth, or who cannot keep pure, or is unable to control his temper, or, for any other reason, cannot reach some generally accepted moral standard. Like those suffering from some congenital malformation, these victims to human passions must only awaken our pity. Just as there is no sin in falling short of physical standards of health and beauty, so there is no fault in not attaining to arbitrary standards of moral excellence and fame. In other words for the material egoist, whose name to-day is legion, there is no such thing as sin, because there is no such thing as a human soul; reason being but phosphorus, conscience a nervous structure only, the future life an illusion, with Heaven for a dream!

If the modern agnostic does not follow on the heel of the materialist in his estimate of sin, he will at any rate try and persuade you that no one knows much about it, that there can be no great harm in following the bent of your

nature, that if there is a God who made you, He will not blame you for doing what your neighbour does, what indeed you cannot well avoid doing, so long as you are tethered by human ties to the race, which for the moment disturbs the surface of this planet.

But besides the materialist and the agnostic there is the would-be Christian, who instead of studying sin as it may be seen in its true light, and in its lurid colours, in the Garden of Gethsemane, forms his estimate of it from what he sees of it in every day life, as it is lived around him. No doubt he will feel free to confess that it is sinful to perpetrate any act which does a deliberate wrong to your neighbour, but short of that, sin is no great harm ; it may indeed offend God while you are in the act of committing it, but it is soon forgiven. God, he will tell you, is merciful and kind, and does not expect much of us ; it does not require a great deal to get to Heaven, which will be the final goal of all, if not indeed the immediate reward after passing away from this world, which purifies by its trials all who pass through it.

I have been reminding you of what modernity has to say about sin, but al-

though the world tries to make it a relic of barbarous times, or a bad dream, or a mere "growing pain," it does not undertake to account for a fact which every honest thinker must recognise and acknowledge.

This fact to which I refer is one of which every man in his saner moments, is terribly aware. Call conscience what you may, the fact remains that it drags us before its dread tribunal,and in language clear and definite as the decision of a judge it charges the sinner with sin, and at the same time passes upon him a verdict of condemnation, the justice of which he feels bound to recognise. No matter what may be said to the contrary, I am as certain as I am of my own existence, that mankind in general is not only conscious of sin but conscious, too, that it is an offence against a Law-Giver, Who will hold every sinner responsible for his transgressions. The stings of conscience may be intermittent, but they are worse than any thorns in the flesh. Unlike outrages perpetrated against physical laws, offences against the moral order come home to every man who is normal, as deeds done in defiance of God Himself. The higher one ascends in the moral

order the clearer and keener becomes the consciousness of the disorder of sin. Yes, not only is man aware that he is a sinner, but furthermore no matter what excuse he may make for his sin, he cannot escape from that painful something within him which seems to say that God, and God only, can absolve him from the guilt of it, and convert him from the condemned sinner into the pardoned penitent. From Genesis to the Apocalypse there is heard, like the wail of the wind and the sob of the sea, a cry on the air from stricken humanity, pleading with its God, Whose property is always to have mercy and to spare, for pity, for mercy, "for against Thee only have I sinned" and "My sin is always before me."

It may seem paradoxically strange, but it is true to say that, in the measure in which a soul advances on the path to perfection, so in that measure does it become more and more conscious of the malice of sin. Hence the holy Prophets and Apostles and the Saints of God generally, never seem to lose sight of the fact that once they were sinners, and that but for the grace of God they would still be unrepentant and unforgiven. Not only so, but even worldly men and women,

who indulge their passions and yield to every licence, living according to the whim of the moment or the fashion of the hour, will tell you in their sober moments how utterly wrong they are with God, how absolutely they despise themselves, how miserable almost to despair they feel, conscious that it is all their own fault. "Yes," as one poor unfortunate said to me not many days ago, "if there was no hell, there ought to be one opened for me, for I am worse than a devil incarnate." As surely as the sun rises, sooner or later the consequences of sin come home. For a time the seven deadly sins may be looked on as amiable weaknesses, and pandering to the passions regarded as nothing more than satisfying legitimate appetites, but in the end there is a reckoning even here! Not long ago in the course of conversation with one who had at his command everything that society and riches could procure, he turned to me and said; "I think I have tried every pleasure; certainly I never denied myself one, and yet I do not believe you could find in any of the clubs another man so steeped and drowned in misery as I am. Yes, you may tell the would-be Smart Set, this is God's truth."

Of sin then, if we are honest with ourselves, we are all conscious. It is the one and only real evil in this world. "My people have done two evils—they have abandoned Me, the fountain of living waters, and have dug for themselves cisterns that can hold no water." It is a terrible thing to offend God, and worse still to make little of it, "drinking down iniquity like water." And yet this is what we see going on in our midst every day. It is not merely that the Beatitudes are not appreciated, or that the Sermon on the Mount remains a dead letter, but the Commandments themselves, when not pronounced impracticable, are ignored. Where is our sense of honesty as corporations or as individuals? It is an age of bribery, so much so that those who, for one reason or another, do not offer what are regarded as sufficiently favourable terms to their clients go under with the bankrupt. In this low practice smart people in the West End are even better schooled than West Ham Guardians. Where is the sense of justice in women of fashion, when, if they do not defraud tradespeople and servants by not paying their bills or wages, they will have resort to the meanest

tricks, to pay less than their real value for the goods they purchase, or else they keep those in their employment waiting for what is justly their own? Where is our sense of charity when our neighbours' characters are torn to shreds, and when it is questionable if there be any foundation at all for the horrible sins with which they are so freely charged? Where is our sense of self-respect when the literature that we read, and the conversations that we hold, would have been regarded as too gross for human consumption in the worst days of Paganism? Lastly let me ask what ideas can we have of duty when God's claims are ignored, when racial rights are denied, when family ties are not recognised, and domestic responsibilities are tossed aside?

There are worse crimes than I have mentioned. Both as a priest and a Englishman I do denounce the vile competition with France for the lowest birth rate in Europe, and our emulation with America to discover excuses for annulling marriages to enter into better financial alliances. It may be said that instances of this kind are rare. But they should not occur at all. Above all they should not be sanctioned in a

Christian country. It is a disgrace—a blot upon our national escutcheon. If only this land would imitate France and America in the characteristics in which they are worthy of imitation! Instead, we seem to borrow from them, as we take from the beasts that perish, their lower instincts only—nay, we do not even imitate the animals which cherish and suckle their young!

The world to-day, being, as it is, culpably ignorant of God, practised in vice, denying the fact of sin, of the existence of conscience, and of the hope of immortality, there is more need for us than for our fathers of old to observe, with diligence, the practices of this holy season of Lent, and to follow during it, all the stages in Sacred Passion of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. If there is one season more than another when we are bound to take up our cross and follow Him, it is during the forty days of Lent. Each scene in the Passion that we are called on to witness and to follow, has, for its mission, a specific lesson to teach. From the Agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, where we have seen sin wreaking its vengeance upon Him "Who hath borne our iniquities and carried our griefs," we

must bring home to ourselves sin ; as it is in itself, and as it is in its effects. What does it matter what the modern man or woman has to tell you about sin? Let them call it by what euphemistic name they will, "an amiable weakness," "a token of growth," "a human development," or what not. Yet I tell you there is no hiding from our sight our Lord's vision of sin. If we are Christians we must take *His* measure of it. When we see Him in conflict with it in Gethsemane, crushed to the ground because of it, sweating blood for the guilt of sin, how can we pretend to make light of its inherent malice, its appalling conquences? Lastly, remember the word of the beloved John: "These things I say to you that you may not sin. But if any man sin we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Just ; and He is the propitiation for our Sins, and not for our sins only, but also for those of all the world." Because of the truth of this saying of the Apostle, most fervently do I exhort you to study the nature of sin, as it is portrayed to us, not in books of false philosophy, not in current literature, not in the modern novel, but in that Agony and Bloody Sweat of Christ our

Lord in the Garden of Gethsemane; when, in His great love for us, He took upon Himself the rôle of the Penitent, sweating blood for the sins of men.

"O, my God, I confess that before now I have utterly forgotten Thee and myself. I have acted many a time as if I were my own master, and turned from Thee rebelliously. I have acted according to my own good pleasure, not according to Thine. And so far have I hardened myself as not to feel, as I ought, how evil this is. I do not understand how dreadful sin is, and I do not hate it and fear it as I ought. I have no horror of it, or loathing. O, my Jesus, what a great and awful difference is there between what I am and what I ought to be! I have lived long enough in this unsatisfactory state. I wish to sin no more. I intend no longer to try and persuade myself that sin is "an imperfection" only. If I had not been a craven coward I should never have pretended to others that wrong was right. I wish I had not been so untruthful about the true character of sin. I am resolved, with Thy grace, from this moment, to be Thine, all Thine, in life and in death."

SCENE II

CHRIST BEFORE ANNAS

CHRIST BEFORE ANNAS

"And Jesus answered him: I have spoken openly to the world: I have always taught in the Synagogue, and in the Temple, whither all the Jews resort; and in secret I have spoken nothing."—St John xviii, 20.

It is more than an hour after the trumpets have sounded the second watch in the tower of Antonia when Judas sets forth with his gang of followers to apprehend his Master in the garden of Gethsemane. Glance for a moment, at the rude mob. It is led by the arch-traitor himself. Closely upon his heels follows a detachment of the Roman garrison from the citadel, under a command of the tribune; then come the chief priests, the magistrates of the Temple, the scribes, and ancients of the Temple; while servants of the temple, servants of the chief priests, and of the Pharisees, together with loiterers, idlers, and odd men belonging to the houses of the priests bring up the rear. Observe they are armed with weapons, with staves, with

clubs, and with swords as though they were going forth to hunt down and to capture some wild beast. What a dark forbidding crew they look as they swing down the steep incline, in the lurid light of their flaming torches, making their way south of the Temple to the bridge flung across the Kedron below.

In the hush of night the tramp of heavy feet crossing the bridge sends up a strangely sinister sound through the valley; which Judas quickly crosses, striking for the pathway leading towards Gethsemane. Within sight of the wicket gate opening into the garden a halt is made. Turning round to his followers Judas has something to say. To prevent all possibility of any mistake under the deep shadows flung by the trees in the light of the Paschal moon, the traitor thinks it better to arrange beforehand a signal with them, so, in a hoarse whisper he says: "Whom I shall kiss that is He, lay hold of Him, and lead Him away cautiously."

Once more onward, up the opposite bank they go, pausing before passing through the gate into the garden. Here, to their surprise the gang is met by the calm, gentle, majestic figure of Jesus.

He is standing alone in the open, waiting almost impatiently for them. Judas immediately going up to Him says, "Hail Rabbi," and kisses Him. Observe, Jesus resents it not. Instead of drawing back with a shudder from the touch of the traitor's lips upon His sacred cheek, Our Lords folds the man in His arms saying to him pleadingly as He does so: "Friend, whereto art thou come, dost thou betray the Son of Man with a kiss?" Oh what a touch of pity more than human is here! What a revelation of that divine Mercy which is above all God's works! Alas! From Judas there is no response. Jesus, raising Himself erect, with arms outstretched, advances towards his murderers, asking "Whom seek ye?" They cry out: "Jesus of Nazareth." To this cry Jesus answers: "I am He." Scarcely has He uttered the word when the whole troop of them reel and totter, till falling backward they drop to the ground each man of them helpless. O wonder of wonders! This terrifying manifestation of divine Power with which they are confronted, seems in no way to shake these wicked men from their murderous intent: for once again in answer to His question: "Whom seek

ye?" they do not hesitate to shout out louder than before, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus draws nearer to them, saying: "I have told you that I am He." Then glancing round and seeing His affrighted disciples anxious about their own safety, He adds: "If therefore you seek Me, let these go their way."

For a moment there is uproar and tumult, during which the ear of Malchus, the servant of the High Priest, is cut off by Peter's sword. Jesus, ever on the outlook for deeds of mercy, bends over the bleeding man, and having healed the wound, says to Peter: "Put up thy sword into the scabbard," adding now, with no tone of fear or sadness in His voice, but firmly, resolutely, "The chalice which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?" Then, as He stands face to face with this mob of armed men fiercely scowling at Him, waiting for the word to spring on Him and to bind Him fast, our Lord says in a tone of gentle reproof to them: "Are ye come out as it were against a thief with swords and staves to apprehend Me? When I was daily with you in the Temple you did not stretch forth your hands against Me, but this is your

hour and the power of darkness." It is enough; they leap upon Him, they tie His hands behind His back, they place an iron collar with chains attached around His neck, they put shackles upon His ankles, draw ropes around His loins, and in this rough way carry out the order of the traitor who had said: "Lay hold of Him and lead Him away *cautiously*." The disciples, seeing what is being done, fearing for their own safety, take to flight, leaving their Master to His fate in the hands of His murderers.

Meanwhile, having secured our divine Lord, their prize, the mob drag Him down the mount, jostle against Him on the bridge, and force Him along the pathway on the opposite side of the Kedron leading towards the Gate Beautiful. Avoiding the road before them, going upward to the Temple, they turn to the left following a path climbing obliquely the steep incline, and bending in the direction of Ophel to the south. Passing through this poor quarter of the city, they drag their divine Victim up the flight of steps opening upon Sion, the upper town. As they do so our Lord, bound and manacled with ropes

and chains, wholly unable to help Himself, with His hands closely tied behind Him, falls, bruising to blood His dear face upon the stone steps. It is an excuse for further cruelty, for He is drawn to and fro up the staircase, while in the still midnight air is heard the echo of the oaths and curses of this savage mob which presses rudely about His sacred person, hemming Him in on every side.

Passing through the fashionable quarter of Sion, they now bear off due west, till nearing the palace of the High Priests standing south of the cenacle, where, but a few hours before, the Master had given His timid disciples their first Communion, the procession reaches its destination.

Crossing the courtyard of the palace, Judas leads our Saviour through the great doorway of the west wing into a long, low chamber, at the further end of which, on a raised daïs, seated on a throne of state, and surrounded by such retainers as may be gathered together at this late hour, behold the ex-high priest, Annas!

Let us pause for a moment that I may tell you something about the character and the history of this white-

draped, white-haired, white-faced villain. "No figure," so we are told, "is better known in contemporary Jewish history than that of Annas; no person was deemed more fortunate and successful, but none also more execrated than the late High Priest. He had held the pontificate for only six or seven years, but it was filled by not fewer than five of his sons, and by his son-in-law, Caiaphas, and by his grandson. And in those days it was, at least for one of Annas' disposition, much better to have been, than to be, High Priest. He enjoyed the dignity of the office, and all its influence, since he was able to promote to it those most closely connected with him. And while they acted publicly, he really directed affairs without either the responsibility or the restraints which the office imposed. His influence with the Romans he owed to the religious views which he professed, to his own partisanship of the foreigner, and to his enormous wealth."

Yes, the besetting sin of Annas was avarice, and in order to satisfy his greed of money there was no device to which he was not ready to stoop. The shops under the cedars of Olivet, as well as

the booths under the porticos of the Temple were all set up for the money-seeking Annas and his family. It was with this shrewd, cruel, worldly Sadducee that Judas made his bargain, and it was with Judas, no doubt, that he bargained for the privilege of being the first to examine Jesus Christ in person. The High Priest's hatred of our Lord dated from nearly three years back, but it had reached its climax on the opening day of the Paschal Week.

What had kindled and fanned into flame this unholy fire in the bosom of Annas? It was this. When our Lord had first come up to Jerusalem He had driven forth from the Court of Gentiles all those who were engaged selling beasts of sacrifice, or in changing foreign money for the shekel. This act had been resented by Annas as a personal injury and insult, but the trouble blew over and men thought the wound had healed. If so, it was again rudely re-opened, for soon after our Lord's triumphal entry into the Holy City, He again turned away from the porticos of the Temple the money-changers with their weights and scales, saying, "My house is a house of prayer, but you

have made it a den of thieves." This was more than the Temple priests could endure; for it meant the collapse of their chief means of money making. Besides, there was the danger of the people rising against them for their peculation. Accordingly they stop our divine Lord as He is walking in the Temple, demanding of Him by what authority He has dared to do these things. But Jesus did not satisfy their curiosity; He answered them by putting to them a question which they dared not answer. Matters being so, you can understand how a man like Annas, with a character at once masterful, yet shrewd and vindictive, would be anxious to cross-examine Jesus Christ. The Chief Priests, ever since the scene of the cleansing of the Temple, had sought to destroy Him; but they feared the people. However, the crafty, clever Annas felt confident that, left in his experienced hands, he could find a way of succeeding in a matter in which others had failed. He was determined to revenge the cleansing act of Jesus Christ. He would bring about His death, in spite of His popularity with the people. Accordingly, he sat up on the night of the

arrest, impatiently pacing his court to and fro, like a hyena in its cage, waiting with eager appetite to satisfy his thirst for blood.

It must have been nearly midnight when our divine Lord stood as a prisoner in the dock before His self-constituted judge, Annas.

For a moment take a look at Annas. How like a lean and hungry vulture he looks, his eager features with beak-like nose, his small, wild, black eyes deeply set beneath the high white brow, his long bony neck stretching forth out of a dark mantle of winter fur, his thin, sinewy hands clutching, almost gnawing, the bench at which he sits. As you watch him you can almost fancy he will presently lift strong wings and swoop down from his rock-like throne to fasten his claws into the flesh of the Lamb of God standing below dumb before His shearers.

Annas opens the examination-in-chief by asking Jesus about His disciples. It is not quite clear in the mind of the High Priest to what party our Lord belongs. He is not a Pharisee nor a Sadducee, neither is He an Herodian, nor a Scribe, nor yet a Zealot or an

Essene. Annas is determined to get Jesus to commit Himself, if in no other way, at least through the betrayal of the character and conduct of His followers. How little does Annas know of the character of the divine Prisoner before him. To say anything to the disadvantage of His disciples is the very last thing to be dragged forth from the sacred lips of Jesus Christ. At the moment there is, unfortunately, little which even His ingenious love can discover to say on their behalf. For nearly three years He has been training them as never did master school his pupils; He has been everything to them; He has kept nothing back from them. They are bound to Him by such ties as never was friend to friend, and yet in the hour of His humiliation, they have all left Him, having fled for their lives. One of them has actually sold Him for less than was usually given for a beast of burden, and now as He is being questioned by the malevolent ex-high priest, Peter in the courtyard below is about to deny with an oath, that he had ever known Him.

And yet for all this our Lord's love of all of them, save one—even of that one!—remains unchanged. He will not

allow Himself to see them pictured before His mind in the moment of their faltering and shame. No, but on the contrary, they are present to Him even now, as they will be when, with the past blotted out, they will rise in the full strength of their love and loyalty, ready, with the one sad exception, each and all to shed their blood, and die a martyr's death for His dear sake.

Annas, finding it impossible to persuade our Lord to say anything touching His disciples, passes over that question as though it were of small account, and goes on to question our Lord about His doctrine. As the event showed, it is an unfortunate question for Annas. The story of the High Priest's own life stands out before the mind of the divine Prisoner clearer than ever the shrewd old man is led to suspect. And so, without directly telling him that he knows of all his deceitful ways of drawing money from poor people, of all his illicit practices, of all his illegal dealings with the Romans, and of all his secret plots with the other priests to compass His death; Jesus gives Annas such an answer to the question put, that so shrewd a judge as he is can scarcely

escape realising that he is standing face to face with One before Whom every single detail of his mercenary, cunning, fox-like life stands out clearly and accurately as in a picture.

This, St John tells us, is what our Lord says in reply to the question put Him by Annas: "*I* have spoken openly to the world, *I* have always taught in the Synagogue and in the Temple, whither all the Jews resort, and in private *I* have spoken nothing. Why askest thou Me?" and then turning to those around and about Him, he adds: "Ask them who have heard what *I* have spoken to them; behold they know what things *I* have said."

Never did a judge in answer to an irrelevant question receive so bewildering a blow. For the moment Jesus and Annas seem to have changed places, and the old Priest of the Temple is being taught a lesson by the young Rabbi of Nazareth which he is not likely soon to forget. Who is the man implied in antithesis by the personal pronoun "I" used so repeatedly and emphatically? Who is the man who has neither spoken openly nor acted openly? Who is the man who in private has said one thing

and in public another? Who is the man whose measure of principle is expediency, and whose idea of success is gold? That man without any mistake is the ex-high priest, Annas. Well might the divine Prisoner put to him the question: "Why askest *thou* Me?" Does not one so well read in the law as Annas, know that this midnight hole-and-corner meeting is illegal? Does not he know that the cross-examination of the prisoner is illegal? Does he not know that to proceed to trial in absence of counsel for the defence is illegal? and does he not know that to open the case without the sworn evidence of witnesses is also illegal? Does he not know that to bind Him is illegal? and does he not know that the arrest was illegal? Has this old, wily, spiteful arch-conspirator in his unseemly impatience to find Jesus of Nazareth guilty of crimes, to be expiated only by crucifixion, lost sight of all these irregularities, and forgotten all legal methods of judicial procedure?

To this question, "Why askest thou Me?" The judge can find no answer.

No answer. For the first time in his long and successful career Annas has met more than his match, and so wild is

he at being caught in the trap he has laid for another, that for once he loses self control and can say nothing, turning ghastly pale. Silence like a shudder is felt by all the court when, suddenly, a sharp sickening sound is heard throughout the Hall. The astonished mob looks up and see before them such a sight as might make angels weep, Jesus is staggering under the pain and shock of a blow. He has been struck across the face by the servant of the High Priest, and the precious Blood is actually running down His cheek and His neck. There is a dead pause during which no man, not even the presiding judge, dares speak. Jesus with difficulty draws Himself up, and looking into the face of His assailant asks him calmly and firmly, "If I have spoken ill give testimony of the evil, but if well why strikest thou Me?" The cruel, cowardly servant who thought to win the favour of his master by striking the Prisoner across the face with a swing from his open hand, turns insultingly to our Lord, asking "Answerest Thou the High Priest so?" But our Lord demands justice and insists that, if He has spoken ill He should be tried for it, not struck;

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if well, He should be praised, not blamed.

And how, let me ask you, does the self-constituted judge deal with this dastardly attack in his presence in open court? He does not deal with it, he does not dare to reprove the Culprit, for he feels himself so shattered under the lash of the divine Prisoner's rebuke, that he is powerless to act or to speak. He had come into court with the idea of asserting his rights and instead he has been taught his duty. With a wave of his long quivering arm he turns to his guard, and in a voice choked with anger he orders them to bind the Prisoner as though He had already been proved guilty, and to march Him off for trial to the court of his son-in-law, Joseph Caiaphas, the official High Priest.

The world has not changed much since the days of Annas. Like him the worldly man, whether priest or layman, is pursuing identically the same ends, scheming for money and position. The very people, who try so plausibly to fasten upon the Society of Jesus the motto "The end justifies the means," are themselves practising it in not a few of their transactions. It is a motto that

would not be altogether inappropriate over the stock exchange, the counting house, the club room, and the boudoir. Of course I do not mean to imply that all Society is unprincipled and without conscience, but I am not so far out of my reckoning when I tell you that in the haste to get rich both men and women seem to have no time to pause and examine the character of the means which they propose to make use of for its attainment. Like Annas they stretch forth their hands to grab at the nearest means within their reach, and provided they further their designs, with the prospect and promise of success, they do not care to investigate too closely the morality of the situation.

We all know how useless it is to argue with a man who has become a slave to the passion, say, of drinking or of gambling. The drunkard will tell you of course that the charge against him is a gross exaggeration, that he never drinks more than his exceptional case requires, and the gambler that he never bets more than he can afford to lose; but all the time you know, if you know anything at all, that you are being told nothing but lies, and that it would be an

act of injustice on your part to believe a single word told you, for the one and simple reason that the miserable man is not a free agent, but a slave bound over hand and foot to his predominant passion.

What is true of the drunkard and the gambler is true no less of the votary of pleasure and of the money-grabber.

In a word, to the man who has lost self-control by playing into the hands of his passions nothing is sacred or serious, the very House of God which is "a house of prayer" will be turned into "a den of thieves" while God Himself will be sold for a handful of silver and condemned to die upon the gallows.

Annas, the vulture, not only feathered his own nest but, when he was baffled and baulked by our blessed Lord's line of action with the money-makers in the Temple, left no stone unturned to have his full revenge by bringing about the murder of Him Who had thwarted him. With this object in view he thought to entrap the divine Master by leading Him to commit Himself about His disciples.

Surely this too is one of the besetting sins of the day, scandalous conversation about one's neighbours. Would that

scandal were confined to the racecourse, the club room, or the market place! You can tether it nowhere.

Is there any place upon God's earth where the best man's character is safe? I know of none; even in the cloister and the sanctuary itself is it liable to be torn to pieces; nay, a single word expressed or even implied is sometimes quite enough to set off a woman in hot pursuit, hunting down her quarry till morally she has done her victim to death.

Poor human nature being what it is, it is necessary, as our Lord says, that scandal should come, and yet "woe to the man by whom it cometh."

There is a silence more musical than any song, more eloquent than any speech, more impressive than any sermon. It is the silence of the man who rather than say anything to the prejudice of another holds his peace. The silence of the divine Prisoner when questioned by Annas, about His disciples is pregnant with lessons for all of us. What a loyal, generous and chivalrous Friend He is! How beautiful and noble does His character stand out, especially when seen in contrast with that of the disingenuous and avaricious Annas! Our Lord is so

straight and simple, so reckless of consequences, when principle is at stake. He is the One whose practice runs level with His theories, whose deeds reflect perfectly His words, whose life in public is what it is in private. So ought our lives similarly to be ordered.

At every stage in the history of the Sacred Passion we are taught by our Lord's example lessons which none of us can afford to ignore. They are character-building lessons, and it is *character* which matters. Would that Annas had felt this! In him you see a man of rare talents with exceptional opportunities of doing good. Had he taken advantage of these gifts, using them for ends lofty and holy in the position and world in which God has placed him, Annas might have built up a character which for all time would have stood out on the page of history as a noble example to his countrymen. "It is example," we are reminded by a modern writer, "which is everything; it is the School of mankind, and they will learn in no other." Alas! in the history of the Sacred Passion we are most unfortunately brought into contact with man after man who has misdirected his talents and mis-

used his opportunities. In men like Annas and Caiaphas, Pilate and Herod, we have forced upon our notice examples of those who might not have transgressed and have transgressed, who could have done good things and have not done them. And why was it that these gifted men, in high station, so far forgot all sense of justice and equity, nay, of decency itself, that without a single exception they one and all bowed to the sway of passion, vying with each other in gross miscarriage of justice till Pilate in spite of his better sense actually signed the death warrant of the Man whom he declared to be altogether innocent? The explanation of this criminal procedure is obvious. These miserable characters on the bench, were all of them men who made expediency their measure of principle and success, their interpretation of truth. They tried, like so many before and since their day, the impossible; to compromise between conscience and popularity, to serve both God and Mammon. Accordingly they ended with contemning God and loving Mammon. "You cannot serve God and Mammon." No, you yourselves cannot any more than could these murderers of

Jesus Christ afford to compromise with principle. Become a money-grabber like Annas, or a self-worshipper like Caiphas, or a place-hunter like Pilate, or a pleasure-seeker like Herod, and you will end by treating Christ your Lord and Saviour much as they did.

The fact is, life is a probation, and we must force ourselves to realise that he and he only is the happy, the "man" blessed that hath not gone after gold, nor put his trust in money nor in treasures. "Who is he," asks the revealed word, "and we will praise *him*?" What is the answer to this question? Who is this blessed one? "He that could have transgressed and hath not transgressed; and could do evil things and hath not done them."

In this world of probation you have to build up a character fitted for Heaven, you have to form and fashion it out of the rude materials that lie before you, into the individual which shall make you, yourself, and none other. Character is what God will demand of you—yes—and a Christ-like character—for to be a Christian means to grow into the likeness of Christ who is the only model for His followers.

If there be any one here present whose past makes him disposed to call out; "For me, then, it is too late," I will remind him of the story of Mary Magdalen, of Simon Peter, of the repentant thief; or if you will of Saul of Tarsus, of Augustine of Hippo, or of Ignatius of Loyola. So long as there is life there is hope even for the very worst amongst us. To such a one I say with the poet:

> "Move upwards, working out the beast
> And let the ape and tiger die."

Let us one and all resolve not only to be on the side of Christ, but to build up characters worthy of our calling. This must be done by meeting our difficulties, not by shirking them, by facing our trials and fighting them like brave Christian men. "Blessed is the man who hath endured temptation, for when he shall have been tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him." Love is service, and service is sacrifice, and sacrifice is the test of character. A man is not measured in the last instance by what he has, nor by what he says, nor even by what he does, but what he *is*. Be a man and observe—

"Thou hast thy way to go, thou hast thy day
To live, thou hast thy need of thee to make
In the hearts of others: do thy things: yes,
slake
The world's thirst for yet another man!
And be thou sure of this: no other can
Do for thee that appointed thee by God."

SCENE III

CHRIST BEFORE CAIAPHAS

CHRIST BEFORE CAIAPHAS

"He hath blasphemed, what further need have we of witnesses? Behold now you have heard the blasphemy. What think you? But they answering said "He is guilty of death."—ST MATTHEW xxvi, 65, 66.

SINCE the hour of our Lord's arrest in the Garden by Judas, the Sanhedrist Priests have been astir, hunting up witnesses who, provided it is made worth their while, are prepared to perjure themselves. The priests themselves have been kept well informed in all the stages of the case since the arrest, and word is now sent them to hurry to the Court of Joseph Caiaphas, as Annas, having found Jesus guilty on two distinct charges, is sending Him at once for trial.

The full conclave consisting of seventy one members of the Sanhedrim, was not permitted by law to assemble in the High Priest's Palace, but a quorum of twenty-three was considered sufficient to constitute a tribunal with some show of authority for its decrees.

Accordingly white, ghost-like figures of priests are seen flitting across the court-yard of the Palace, to take their places in the court where Joseph Caiaphas will preside at the mock trial ecclesiastical.

Picture to yourselves an oblong chamber at the further end of which you observe a semi-circular platform supporting a wide inlaid throne on which is seated the High Priest, Caiaphas. He is wearing the tiara, the ephod, and the official richly embroidered alb with the famous silver bells tinkling along its fringes. On either side of the throne sweeps the divan with mats and cushions, on which sitting cross-legged you may count, in all, twenty-two priests. At the extremities places are provided for the two secretaries, one of whom is to record everything said against the accused party, while the business of the other is to chronicle every item in His favour. Small need to speak of the latter's task. It will not be an important one since the Jewish authorities are determined, no matter what the evidence, to send the case to the Civil Court of Pilate.

Before this grim gathering of hostile white-robed prelates, Jesus, our Lord bound, is brought for trial. See Him, as

He stands facing the Nasi, or Council President, Caiaphas. What a contrast between the two High Priests! Jesus, wearing the garments of an ordinary Jewish peasant, stands with His hands tied behind Him facing Caiaphas and his perjured brother judges. What a look of indescribable sadness steals across the worn and weary face of our Lord, as He raises those soul-reading eyes to survey the scene which the red glimmering light of the oil lamps reveals to Him! What a calm and quiet dignity possesses Him!

After something like silence and order among the motley crowd struggling for places has been secured, this Ecclesiastical Court opens proceedings, but not as it should have done, with a clear and distinct statement made by the Nasi of the charges alleged against the Prisoner, and in the presence of witnesses prepared to support those charges, and before counsel and witnesses watching the case on behalf of the defence. "The spirit of the Jewish law," it has been well said, "was merciful in the extreme, and under no system has there been exhibited a more anxious desire to guard the rights of the prisoner, or to allow him oppor-

tunities of acquittal." For instance, as regards his own evidence, and the testimonies of witnesses, and the time of trial, and the action of the judges, the accused, if legally and legitimately tried had every advantage possible offered to him. His rights were at once recognised and protected by law. But then, this trial of our Lord was not a real but a mock trial—a travesty of justice—nay, it was a diabolical farce. Follow its various stages from the opening to the closing scene, and be satisfied that it is, as I have said, from start to finish a gross miscarriage of justice.

Instead of opening the case by informing our Lord of the nature of the crime with which He is charged, and then proceeding to call upon witnesses to substantiate it, and finally citing the prisoner to appear, in case of presumptive guilt, before the whole Sanhedrim for formal trial and sentence, Joseph Caiaphas on the contrary begins the trial by summoning false witnesses who are in collusion with the bench, and who have been bribed by it to give evidence against Jesus that it may surely bring about His death.

I repeat, never in the history of ecclesiastical trials has there been carried

on under cover of the darkness of night and the semblance of legality, so deliberate a plot for the miscarriage of justice.

The law said, "By the mouth of two or three witnesses shall he die who is to be slain." "We must proceed legally in this trial," ironically exclaim the priests; "so let us summon to our presence not two or three but a very host of witnesses, against the Accused." Accordingly there troops into the court quite a swarm of witnesses; but observe, there is not one of them who has not been taught his lesson and told by the presiding judges what line his evidence is to take. It is, I say, a false trial pushed forward by false witnesses giving false evidence in the presence of false judges. Well may our Lord have exclaimed, "Woe to you, hypocrites, because you tithe mint and anise and cummin, and have left the weightier things of the law." Yes, and among these weightier things of the law, oh! you brood of vipers, is the commandment: "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour," and that other item of the law which you seem to have lost sight of, namely, the penalty to be meted out by it to a false witness! Does it not run thus: "Thou shalt not pity him but shall

require life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, and foot for foot?" Alas, you are a generation which strains at a gnat while swallowing a camel. Yes, you will observe, you hypocritical judges, just so much of the law as will suit your deadly purpose, that only, and no more.

Caiaphas and his brother judges do not dare to proceed according to the Jewish law. They know well that if they carried out, irrespective of consequences, the provisions of that law, a verdict must be found in favour of the divine Prisoner, and they are there not to acquit, but to condemn Him.

Let me for a moment remind you of a passage in St Mark's account of the trial. Does it not run thus? "And the Chief Priests and all the Council sought false witness against Jesus that they might put Him to death." Is there, then, among the three and twenty judges presiding at this awful trial, not one to hold the scales of justice evenly? Is there not a solitary one to respect the claims of justice and the legal rights of the Prisoner in the dock?

No, for once in the history of the supreme ecclesiastical Jewish court of Justice there sit three and twenty judges

who are unanimous in their determination, as we have said, no matter how the evidence goes, to send the Prisoner to the Civil Court.

Pilate, the Roman Procurator, alone has power to pass the sentence of death by crucifixion; and that is the death which the Jewish priests have resolved that Jesus shall die.

See them, this bench of judges, draped in white, sitting cross-legged, swaying their bodies to and fro, looking like white bears waiting impatiently to tear to pieces the Victim to be flung to them.

And now listen to the several fictitious charges brought against the divine Prisoner by the well-drilled perjured witnesses. Observe! One swears that our Lord was in the habit of breaking the Sabbath day, that He has been known, on more occasions than one, to have worked a miracle on the sacred day of rest. Another attests that he has it on the authority of the Pharisees themselves that Jesus of Nazareth has indeed wrought such miracles as He was credited with, but He worked them through the power of Beelzebub! Another states on his oath that when a wretched woman was actually taken in the midst of her

sins, the Prisoner, before whom she had been brought, had not only refused to condemn her, but had even gone out of His way to cast a slur upon the very men who, out of respect to their law, had charged her with adultery, a crime for which she should have been stoned to death. Another witness comes forward to say that he was present when Jesus had said to Mary of Magdala, a public sinner in the city of Naim: "Thy sins are forgiven thee." This witness is followed by yet another who states that it was known to be the boast of Jesus Christ that He had power to cure not only the ills of the body, but even the ailments of the soul. Then comes in one who says that the Prisoner was often heard to call the Pharisees "hypocrites," a "brood of vipers," "an adulterous generation;" moreover that He had thrown ridicule on the doctrine of the Sadducees, and had even dared to rebuke before the common people the Chief Priests of the Holy Temple.

Behold here, some samples of the multitudinous evidence brought by these suborned witnesses against Jesus Christ in the court house of Joseph Caiaphas.

Do you suppose that the priests or

any others present care a trumpery shekel whether the Prisoner has kept the Sabbath, or has worked miracles, or forgiven sins, or observed the oral law or its traditions? About such things these time-serving, money-grabbing, place-hunting, sceptical priests care simply nothing at all; and they are becoming not a little uneasy because so far the evidence which has been advanced against our blessed Lord has not taken the turn they had anticipated and looked for. As it at present stands, the evidence is altogether insufficient to lead to what they want, and will have: a death sentence against the Accused.

Turn your eyes to the bench: see how bitterly do these judges scowl at one another; how pale with rage they turn, looking first at Annas, the Vice-President, and then at Joseph Caiaphas, who scowls back at them, giving expression to his biting retort, "You know nothing." "The whole Council," St Matthew informs us, "sought false witness against Jesus that they might put Him to death, and they found not what they had wanted, though many false witnesses had come in."

At last there is a stir in the Court,

and the rumour goes that two witnesses have arrived, prepared to give evidence which will prove to the satisfaction of the Court, the Prisoner to be guilty of constructive blasphemy. For a moment the hopes of the judges revive, and Caiaphas gives orders to bring in the witnesses. The first of these pointing to the divine Saviour takes an oath saying, "This man said, I am able to destroy the Temple of God and in three days to rebuild it." The other swears before the Court that he heard the Prisoner say, "I will destroy this Temple made with hands and within three days I will build another not made with hands." To the lay mind this evidence appears crushing in its effects, but to the bench of judges it yields a sense only of uneasiness. They know that though between the statements of the two last witnesses there may be found some partial agreement, yet that the agreement is not sufficiently close to satisfy the requirements of their law. According to the terms of the Jewish statute, the statements of witnesses to be conclusive must be not only similar, but absolutely identical. Besides this, unfortunately for them, some of the

priests themselves were present in the portico of the Temple when Jesus had uttered the sentence referred to. It was on the day of His first public visit to their Temple, nearly three years ago, when He drove from its porches the buyers and the sellers. On that occasion they themselves had put Him the question: "What sign dost Thou show to us seeing Thou dost these things?" In answer Jesus had certainly not said: "I am able to destroy the Temple," nor had He said: "I will destroy the Temple." In fact, He had said nothing about destroying, but on the contrary something about rebuilding the Temple. His words on that memorable occasion, and they remembered them only too accurately, implied a defiance flung at them. He had used the imperative mood saying: "Destroy you, if you will, this Temple," as it were challenging them to destroy it; and then He had gone on to say that even if they did so, He could and would rebuild it. But He was referring, as we know, to the Temple of His Body.

The High Priests wax furious as they think over these things, but while they are trying to find a way out of the

difficulty presented to them, presently amid a scene of indescribable confusion, Caiaphas, quivering with anger and emotion, rises from his throne crying out to our Lord as he points to the array of false witnesses, "Answerest Thou nothing to these things that are laid to Thy charge by these men?" Jesus with His hands tied behind Him stands facing the angry judge, but answers him never a word.

Why does our Lord hold His peace and make no answer? He makes none, because He is resolved to throw the whole responsibility of this awful night upon the right shoulders, and, if possible, to force the High Priest, while yet there is time for repentance, to realise that upon his own perjured soul lies the accumulated guilt, which arises out of this miscarriage of justice in the trial under his presidency.

Yes, Jesus means to bring home to Caiaphas the illegalities in this night's proceedings for which he, as the official High Priest, is chiefly responsible. The arrest before the trial was illegal, the examination-in-chief before Annas illegal, the night sitting of the Sanhedrim illegal, and every successive stage in the proceedings of that night's session has been

illegal. Moreover by the provisions of the Jewish law which regulates the ecclesiastical tribunal of Justice, Caiaphas is obliged to provide counsel for the defence and he has not done so. He is also obliged to sift carefully every point of the evidence of each witness, and he has not done so. He is further obliged to protect the rights of the accused party, to treat the Prisoner as innocent until proved guilty, and to refrain from asking incriminating questions; and on every point he has failed to comply with what is required of him. For these reasons among others, our Lord refuses to take any formal part in this so-called ecclesiastical trial, in which no provision of the law has been respected and in which every legal right of the Prisoner has been violated, while the very first elements of natural justice itself have been shamefully outraged. Accordingly Jesus holds His peace, and to the question put to Him by Caiaphas answers nothing.

The eloquence of the solemn and awful silence on the part of our Lord staggers the judges; they positively reel under it, as though struck by some unseen hand. Caiaphas himself knows not where to turn from the sight of the wan,

calm, and majestic face, that seems to look into his flushed, quivering, and anxious features, searching them through and through.

How can he escape from our Saviour's pleading eyes, which are reading the story written in letters of fire on the guilty soul of His judge? Throwing off with a supreme effort, the guilty fear that clings to him, Caiaphas, panting with rage, is now more determined than ever to force an answer from Jesus; he is not going to be set at naught, and be treated by the Prisoner with contemptuous silence in presence of this bench of judges over which he is officially presiding as High Priest.

Once more Caiaphas rises from his seat; this time to put a question, no doubt suggested by the observant and crafty Annas. It is a question which he feels certain will not fail to draw forth an answer from the lips of the silent Prisoner before him; and it is one upon the answer to which sentence of condemnation or acquittal must inevitably turn. Accordingly, solemnly and emphatically it is put: "I adjure Thee by the living God that Thou tell us if Thou be the Christ, the Son of the living

God." Oh, listen with bated breath to the calm emphatic answer which comes forth with majestic precision from the divine Lips of the divine Prisoner. It is an answer by which He pronounces, seals and delivers His own death-warrant to the criminal judge. "And Jesus" the Evangelist tells us, said to Caiaphas, "I am. Nevertheless I say to you, hereafter you shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of the power of God and coming in the clouds of heaven." It is as though Jesus had said to the High Priest: "Although now and here you see Me before you as a Prisoner, then and there you shall see Me before you as your Judge; then you and I, Caiaphas, shall have changed places; for then will it be your turn to answer the question you have even now put to Me; "Answerest thou nothing to the things these witnesses lay to thy charge?"

For a moment there is a silence that may almost be felt throughout the Court, the declaration of the Prisoner having staggered every man present. Never before in the course of His public ministry had Jesus of Nazareth so clearly, distinctly, so fully, so emphatically, and so solemnly defined in terms the character of His

mission and the altitude of His personality. In the most critical scene of this most awful drama, its central figure, even Jesus Christ the Prisoner, proclaims before the Priesthood of Israel His Messianic claims. From this High Court of Justice the Son of Man sends forth a message to the whole Jewish people declaring that the Messiah has arrived and is actually in their midst; to the whole Roman world; nay, to humanity itself, Jesus witnesses to His own divine Personality, reminding mankind, in terms about which there can be no mistake, that He is the One divine Person to whom all history converges, or from whom it radiates, that in Him all prophecy is fulfilled as from Him all jurisdiction is derived, and that hereafter He will come on the right hand of the power of God in the clouds of heaven to reward the just with everlasting life, and the wicked with everlasting punishment. Never in this world had there been heard such a proclamation as that.

Having heard this solemn and sacred answer to his question, the High Priest, had he acted according to the provision of the law, should have turned to the bench of judges, informing them that

after such an avowal as they had heard from the Prisoner, it was their business to investigate the matter so as to satisfy themselves and the people whom they represented concerning these Messianic pretensions, to which now in open court Jesus Christ had laid claim. "Is He or is He not an impostor?" The presiding judge ought to have informed his brother judges that this was the question before them, and the only one which they should have proceeded to try.

As a matter of fact, how did this bench of perjured judges conduct itself? What line did the Nasi, Caiaphas, take? Look at him; he springs up like one smarting under the sting of a lash, and rending his garments from hem to hem, he sends forth a cry, as it were of pain, throughout the court, exclaiming: "He hath blasphemed, what further need have we of witnesses? Behold now you have heard the blasphemy, what think you?" They answering say, "He is guilty of death."

The reply of our dear and blessed Lord was regarded by the Sanhedrists as blasphemous. That we all know; but is there not, I ask, a very close similarity between the attitude of

Caiaphas and his companions, and the holders of the so-called New Theology? Do they not, too, cry out in answer to the divine claim that it is blasphemous? To me it is strange how men who have studied the twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh chapters of St Matthew's Gospel can say there is no Christology in the Synoptics. I do not see how Jesus Christ could possibly make it clearer to Jew or Gentile that He claimed to be by Nature "Son of God," as, by the nature He assumed, He was "Son of Man."

It was because He dared to proclaim His divine Personality in all the fulness and literalness of the word that those priest-judges condemned Him for blasphemy. Hence, too, the cry of the people, "We have a law, and according to the law He ought to die; because He made Himself the Son of God." It is not my purpose this morning to point out the witness of history and Christianity itself to the Divinity of Christ; but I do think this, that if Joseph Caiaphas with his brother judges are to be found guilty of murder, nay, of Deicide, it will be difficult indeed to make any defence for so-called Christians, who deny that Jesus Christ was anything more than a

very good man. If He was not all He claimed to be, when His confession actually signed his death warrant, He was not merely "a very bad man," but the worst of men: nay, the perjured blasphemer which His judges called Him.

There never have been wanting, at any stage in the history of Christianity, men who have denied the claims of Christ; but it has been reserved for our own epoch to produce those who, while repudiating the Divinity of Christ, still venture to style themselves Christians. It is a matter of common knowledge that many ministers of religion assert that they are wholly unable to accept the Virgin Birth or the Resurrection, and proclaim their unbelief from their very pulpits. Of such, I ask, how, in honesty, they can remain where they are! In commercial transactions that line of action would be styled by a very ugly name indeed! There is, to my ears, in this Christian land, a worse ring in the voice that falters over the divine claims of Jesus, than in the cry of Caiaphas, uttering condemnation against Him. Let the world know, I say, if they are, or if they are not followers of Christ. The Church

of England must look to this, and unless she speedily rights herself as a champion of the Divinity of Christ, her *raison d'être*, as a breakwater, against the incoming tide of infidelity will be gone. At present it would seem that some of our Anglican friends hardly know what to believe. They have revised the Bible—they are talking of revising the Prayer Book—and they have come near to revising themselves out of Christianity altogether. At this moment I have a friend under instruction drawn to the Catholic Church, because he had become so weary and worn out with contradictory opinions that he really did not know what to accept as true, or what to reject as false. Among prominent clergymen of the Established Church my friend has been unable to find any agreement upon many points of doctrine which seemed vital to Christianity. It does indeed seem strange that while the churches round about are yielding, under the pressure of "higher criticism" and what not, both dogmatic and moral tenets, we Catholics should be charged with adding to our repertoire. Certainly the Church has not given up one jot or tittle of her body of dogma or code of morality since that day when she started on her mission

from the Pentecostal Chamber. To the world she is the great enigma. Not many days ago I was asked by a scientist how, as an educated man, I could belong to a Church which did not allow people to think for themselves. In reply I told him that I should be only too grateful, life being what it is, if some other institution could arise to solve my scientific difficulties as satisfactorily as the Church answered my soul questions respecting revelation. "*Scio cui credidi*," I know whom I trust.

The Catholic Church is slow but sure. From the first moment of her being she accepted the divinity of Christ, but it took her four hundred years to define it in terms! With rare exceptions those men who talk so glibly about "thinking for themselves," obtain their knowledge second hand, and unlike their teachers they often become so self-centred that they forget even God; soon coming to refuse to believe what they can not label with a scientific name, or precipitate in a test tube, or dissect with their scalpel. Meanwhile they speak of the Catholic Church as "being at her old business, trying to stop the movement of the world." There may be some excuse for what men say

against the Catholic Church because, as outsiders, it is almost impossible to understand her, especially where some modern English histories are made to tell against her; but are they not wholly inexcusable for teaching, as the outcome of their aggressive ephemeral theories, that God is non-existent, that Christ was a visionary, the soul is a myth, and eternity a dream. What will be the future of men who proclaim with Haeckel that "free will is a pure dogma, based on an illusion with no real existence?"

When a Christian people slip off the broad platform of sound Christianity they are on an inclined plane; and if we may judge from the sensual books read, the loose plays applauded, the gross superstitions practised, the palmists consulted, the quacks fee'd, and the charms worn by Society women to-day, there seems to be a growing section of the world already on the down grade. If Jesus Christ were to come to London to-day, He would find Himself in an environment not altogether unlike His surroundings in the palace of the high priests, when they charged Him with blasphemy. Of course there would be some to stand by Him, but there would be many more to deny that they could

discover any difference in kind between Him and Moses or Gautama, Zoroaster or Mahomet, while other leaders of Society would place Him on a line with Plato, or Socrates, or Epictetus, or Marcus Aurelius. One can almost hear the comments that would be made. "He is indeed a great man; maybe a great philosopher, but He is not God." Or, as one said to me not long ago: "I take it that He was as divine as the most divine among us."

I cannot conceive a greater calamity befalling a nation than the sin of apostasy from the God who once sojourned in their midst "in the likeness of sinful flesh." I greatly fear that a people which begins to doubt the word of Jesus Christ as the truth of God, will before very long come to call into question the existence itself of a Personal God. Without a Personal Being to look to, and to lean upon, religion would soon become little more than a high-sounding name; it would altogether go under and disappear when confronted by an assault of passion or an attack of unbelief.

What is happening in our midst today? Are not the foundations of religion being in many instances undermined by muddy streams of impurity,

and are not its flying buttresses and towers being attacked and shattered by the artillery of rationalists, till the very citadel itself would seem to be imperilled?

When once the strong tower of religion is gone the nation itself is doomed. Look at past and ancient Phoenicia; remember Athens, remember Rome! Nay, remember Jerusalem, the city of perfect beauty, the city seated on the hill!

Over against it our Lord was once seen gazing and weeping, while the throng pressing about Him was shouting itself hoarse with its hosannas and blessings. But Jesus wept because, as His eyes were being rivetted on the city that knew not the day of her visitation, He foresaw all things that would be—her own ruin and her people's sin.

Are we, are you, the favoured, the leisured class of this vast and wealthy city so much better than were the inhabitants of Jerusalem in our Lord's day, that you can find no occasion to lament and weep? How do you stand? Consult the legal and medical professions, or question the stock-broker or money-lender, for they, as well as the secretaries of your clubs, and the clerks in

your banks and the counting-house, know perfectly well the hopeless condition in which some of you are involved. But I will pass from these witnesses, who are external to you, to question your own selves.

Tell me what is the literature that interests you, which are the plays that amuse you, what is the society that entertains you?

When alone, if ever you are alone, whither do your thoughts wander; where are your ambitions, what are your desires, your hopes, your harbour of refuge, your perfect peace and rest?

"How long will ye love vanity, and seek after lying?"

For a Christian people outside Christ there can be no true and lasting peace and rest. Come back, come back, I say, to Christ Jesus our Lord. Many of you have practically given up Christianity, because you have never really recognised and embraced Christ.

Before the teaching must come the teacher. Lay hold of Christ the Master and the teaching will follow.

Take your lesson from the disciple blessed Peter, in whom I see three distinct stages in the evolution of Christian sanctity. First of all comes his profes-

sion of faith and loyalty in our Lord's person. "Thou art Christ, the Son of the Living God;" then follows unhesitating belief in and acceptance of His teaching. "Thou hast the words of eternal life, to whom else shall we go?" and then there comes the final goal of all—clinging love. "Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee."

Behold here your threefold object lesson in blessed Peter. Repose in the certitude of the Teacher, repose in the certitude of His teaching, and repose in the certitude of His love.

As you love your own immortal souls I most earnestly exhort you to rest not satisfied till you have reached this third stage in spiritual growth—for it is love only—love personal of Christ our Lord—which will teach you with blessed Peter that "Love's service standeth in love's sacrifice, and whoso suffers most has most to give" to Him who gave Himself for you.

"For life with all it yields of joy and woe
And hope and fear—believe the aged friend—
Is just our chance o' the prize of learning love,
How love might be, hath been, indeed, and is!
And that we hold thenceforth to the uttermost
Such prize, despite the envy of the world,
And, having gained truth, keep truth — that is all."

SCENE IV

CHRIST BEFORE PILATE

CHRIST BEFORE PILATE

"For this was I born, for this came I into the world that I should give testimony to the truth. Everyone that is of the truth heareth My voice."—St John xviii, 37.

On the north east of the Holy Temple in menacing attitude stood the great Herodian Citadel called after Mark Antony, Turris Antonia. The perpendicular sides of the hill on which this palatial fortress was reared were faced with polished marble so as to defy all attempts to scale its walls. On the platform immediately above this impregnable rampart was planted the square built Citadel itself. At each angle of it there shot up a tower, the one to the south side being conspicuous by a turret from which the Roman Garrison, much to the annoyance of the priests, could command an unbroken view of the of the interior of the Holy Temple. To render this marble camp an abode suitable for the Roman Governor in times of danger,

Herod had built, on a lower platform hewn out of the living rock, a sumptuous residence, embodying Grecian taste and Oriental luxury. The prætorium, of which the Gospel speaks, was approached on its western side through an open court or forum, leading to a noble Roman archway flanked by two others on a smaller scale than it. This triple archway opened into an area paved with red flagstones, called by Greeks, Lithostrotos, and by Jews, Gabbatha. Here at right angles with the archway stood the white marble Tribune or Bema from which the Governor was wont to administer justice. Beyond it sprang a grand staircase sloping up to the balcony or loggia sweeping to the right and left of the Governor's hall.

It was perhaps while standing in the morning sun on this balcony that Pilate's attention was first arrested by the wild cries of the mob below, as it came surging along its way through the winding streets of the city, triumphant in the capture of the Prisoner, Jesus Christ. Soon the truculent swelling crowd appears in sight, and as it draws nearer, all the while shouting and madly gesticulating, Pilate with his officers of state

looks down upon the scene with a glance in which are blended a Roman's hatred and contempt.

Between the Governor and the people of Jerusalem there was nothing in common. On the contrary they disliked one another intensely. Like most Romans the Procurator had a sovereign contempt for all Orientals, and for Jews in particular; and to this contempt was added a hatred which recent events had greatly embittered. On three separate occasions the Jews had thwarted Pilate: first when he had set a cohort with its pagan insignia to garrison Antonia; secondly, when he had attempted to hang upon the walls of his palace some golden shields dedicated to the genius of Tiberius; and thirdly, when he had laid hands upon the Temple treasure and seized Corban money with which to repair the aqueduct of Etham. On all these ocasions Pilate had come into collision with the people of Jerusalem, and on each of them they had been triumphant, getting their own way in spite of him. Naturally, then, there was little room for love between the Roman Governor and the citizens of Jerusalem. Pilate thought he knew them, but they

knew him better; and this they knew about him, that they could be sure if only they insisted long enough and strongly enough they would succeed in wringing out of him, in spite of his attitude of resolve and menace, the one and only verdict against Jesus which they wanted—sentence of death.

Like most weak men, Pilate begins by taking up what seems to be a strong and defiant attitude. "What charge," he carelessly asks them, "do you bring against the prisoner?" "What accusation bring you against this man?" The chief priests are taken aback; they are not prepared to find Pilate in this testy mood; they had almost hoped he would have been cowed by their imposing numbers, and would have been at any rate glad during their festival season to pass over questions regarding the nature of the specific charges against the Prisoner. Looking up at him fiercely they shout back: "If He were not a malefactor we would not deliver Him up to you," by which they mean to convey: "We do not want your law, we ask your verdict; we do not need the Prisoner's trial, we demand His death." Pilate with folded arms stands on the balcony

surveying the mob tossed to madness in the court below. He takes in the situation, he sees clearly enough what they want, and he makes up his mind, so he thinks, how to deal with their defiant insolence. As they do not seem disposed to throw into form any clear and definite charge against our Lord, Pilate turns upon them, exclaiming as he moves with a wave of his hand: "Take Him you, and judge Him according to your law." The chief priests, the scribes, and people too, are exasperated beyond endurance by the sneering, cynical mood of the Governor who seems anxious to fling down the gauntlet, and once again to challenge them. But these Jews are not to be cowed, nor will they be put off; they thirst for the blood of their Victim, and are resolved to go on clamouring for it till they have drained Him of it, to the very last drop. With the intention of making Pilate believe that the Prisoner has been already legally tried by their own law, and found by it guilty of death, they shout out: "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death." There is an abrupt pause, during which, becoming desperate, they trump up three distinct indictments

against our Lord. What they say is this: "We have found this man perverting our nation." It is not true, there never was any such charge adduced against Him. It is a deliberate lie. Secondly they say: "We have found this man forbidding us to give tribute to Cæsar." It is not true, and they know it. It is a deliberate lie. Thirdly, they exclaim: "We have found this man saying He is Christ the King." Nor is there any shred of evidence for this accusation: it is not true. The charge against our Lord is not that He pretends to be a king, but that He claims to be the Messiah. The accusation against Him is on the contrary that He refused to act as a king, nay, that when they themselves had wished to make Him their king He had fled away and hid Himself. If only He had proclaimed Himself to be a king in their midst, and had unfurled the banner of revolt against Rome; if only He had forbidden tribute to be paid to Cæsar, and if only He had perverted the nation,—had in fact really done what they had said He had, but what as a matter of fact He had not done, the Jewish people would have rallied round Him, would have fought

by His side, and would have strained all resources and every nerve to support His claims: nay, they would have died to a man in order to break the Roman yoke, and to crush the hated foreigner who lorded it over them. It is just because Jesus Christ is a religious and not a political reformer that the Jews have risen against Him in whom they find their hopes were misplaced, and in whom their highest expectations were being bitterly disappointed. Pilate who knows his audience only too well, listens to the clumsy charges which he recognises as being framed on the spot with the object of intimidating him. He scowls down upon them with a look of supreme contempt, his cold grey eyes glaring like steel at them, while his pale lips curl up in scorn of them. Rising from his judgment seat, the Governor turns abruptly upon his heel, passes under the arras into the prætorium, and as he does so, he orders the Captain of the guard to follow with the Prisoner.

This is quite an unusual course for the Governor to take. By it he means to intimate to the priests and the mob below that he utterly mistrusts them, that he

will not be intimidated by them, and that he intends to get to the bottom of the ugly business by examining in person the Prisoner, Jesus Christ.

Priests as well as people realise the situation. They watch the steel-clad guard leading away their Victim, taking Him up the staircase opening into the Governor's Court, and as He disappears through the doorway they lift their voices till the air rings again with groans and hisses, curses and oaths, imprecations and blasphemies in wild and horrible discord.

While all is sound and fury among the massed throng outside the Court, within is peace and order, the silence broken only by the fountains playing on the broad lily leaves mantling the face of the waters in the snow-white basins that adorn the centre of the hall. What a change of scene is here! Behold our divine Lord standing on the mosaic floor among the marble columns that support the famous gilded roof set up by the Herod who some three and thirty years ago, when Jesus was a Babe in Mary's arms, had sought His life. Pilate now has taken the place of Herod the Great, and before many hours shall have passed he will have signed our Lord's

death warrant condemning Him to hang dying, nailed like a felon to the curséd tree.

Pilate dismisses his guard, and mounting the steps of his throne bids the divine Prisoner draw near to him. Jesus and Pilate are alone, face to face. The Roman Governor, for the first time in his varied life feels he is in the presence of some mysterious Person whose bearing and whose appearance seem to belong to another world. He speaks kindly and quietly to the Prisoner, and soon passes from other points to the last of the three charges alleged against Him. Somewhat anxiously as well as inquisitively he puts the question "Art Thou the King of the Jews?"

Our Lord lifts His divine countenance, and looking into the eyes of His judge He answers the question put by asking another: "Sayest thou this of thyself, or have others told it thee of Me?" As though Jesus would say to Pilate: "Do you ask Me this question out of a wish to know the real truth about my case, or is it mere idle curiosity which leads you to put it?" Pilate feels not a little embarrassed; he does not think it altogether consistent with his dignity to appear to be personally in-

terested in a matter which he would like to treat as of small importance. Accordingly, drawing himself up he says to our Lord: "Am I a Jew? Thy nation and the chief priests have delivered Thee up to me." And then turning at once from the charge of kingship and the other specific charges, he asks for information about something which he is really interested to know. He asks Jesus Christ about His life and the motives that have actuated it, specially about the causes that have been at work to have thus stirred up the bitter hatred of the whole Jewish nation against Him. Leaning forwards and stretching forth his hands the judge asks imperatively, almost imploringly: "What hast Thou done?"

Let us for a moment pause to ask ourselves what Jesus has done? What has He not done? Has He not done all manner of good and no kind of evil? What a wonderful Personality He is. What a mystery of love is the Incarnation! The divine becomes human, the infinite becomes finite, the immortal becomes mortal, the impassible becomes passible. He who is great becomes little, He who is strong becomes weak, He who is high becomes low, the rich one becomes

poor. Do you ask what Jesus has done? Why, He has done everything that a Man-God could do to win human love, being made like unto us in all things outside sin. He was made flesh, being made of a woman, born of a woman. Yes, the Son of a woman, of a pure woman, who was a poor woman also; of a woman who ministered to Him as our mothers ministered to us, feeding Him at her breast, rocking Him to sleep in her arms, nursing Him, loving Him, caressing Him, while He loved, obeyed and caressed her. What has He done? Ask the five thousand men whom He fed on the mountain side; ask the lepers whom He restored to health; ask the blind man who stood at the gate of Jericho; ask Zacchæus or Jairus; or the widow of Naim. Or, go if you will to Magdalen, once the sinner, or to the woman of Samaria who was actually living in sin, or to that other brought to Him fresh from her guilty act—they will one and all tell you what Jesus has done—how He forgave them, put new life into them, and set them on their journey with such a courage, strength and hopefulness as they had never before felt. What has He done? Ask Peter, James

and John, and the rest of the Apostles, and they will tell you that in their case He had left nothing undone, having weaned them from the world, having schooled them into His ways, and having loaded them with favours and blessings. Who is there here present that could not add to all this his own special indebtedness to Jesus Christ? He has loved each one of us as though there were no one else to love, and He has loved all as He has loved each. Behold, here you have set before you a chapter out of the story of all He has done.

What did our Lord Himself answer to Pilate's question: "What hast Thou done?" St John tells us that Jesus answered: "My Kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would certainly strive that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from hence."

Pilate leaned back on his throne baffled and baulked by the simplicity, the sublimity, the majesty of our Lord's answer. The judge looked into the face of the Prisoner before him, feeling, as he did so, that he was gazing into the countenance of one who really

seemed to be what He claimed to be, as divine as He was human. What would not Pilate have given to have been able fully to satisfy himself about the pretensions of this strangely wonderful Personality before him, of one who claimed to be a King and to rule a kingdom, whose area and whose frontiers were not discoverable on the surface of the earth.

Once more Pilate leaned forward, and closely scanning the divine Figure before him he asks: "Art thou a King then?" Jesus answered: "Thou sayest that I am a King. For this was I born, for this cause came I into the world that I should give testimony to the truth. Everyone that is of the truth heareth My voice." Behold, here in this magnificent charge to Pilate our Lord defines in terms clear and definite the character of His kingship and of His kingdom. Elsewhere He proclaimed to the world: "I am the Truth." Yes, Jesus Christ is the infallible Truth, the immutable Truth, eternal Truth, and absolute Truth. And He came into the world charged with this mission, deputed to this work, to give testimony to the truth, to show men that He was the

Way to the truth, nay, Truth itself. He lived for the truth, and now He is prepared to die for the truth.

Great men when they die, by a figure of speech are said to live on in their works. Jesus Christ does actually live on in His work. He founded a kingdom, He set up a Church, He established a rule upon earth. His empire is not to be measured by area or acres, nor by physical force, but by its power of proclaiming the truth. "Go," He said to His Apostles, His ambassadors and ministers, "Go, teach all nations." And what were they to teach? They were to teach all truth, all religious truth to all nations throughout all the world, and throughout all time. "Everyone that is of the truth heareth My voice." For, "He that heareth you heareth Me, and he that despiseth you despiseth Me. I am with you all days even to the end of the world." Here in these few words I remind you what was the aim and scope of our divine Lord's mission in this world. We, as members of His Church, know this about it, that it, and it alone, can and does give to its members repose, absolute repose in the possession of truth. The world calls us slaves for believing

on the mere testimony of Christ's Church what we ourselves cannot prove. Does it much matter what the world says about what it does not understand? The only question which it concerns us to know is what Jesus Christ says respecting the teaching of His Church. He says with no little emphasis that it is Her mission to teach, and ours to learn. And He adds, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"—"free with the freedom with which Christ has set us free." There is no repose like this repose in the certitude of Faith.

Pilate sat erect as he listened to the strangely wonderful language of the divine Prisoner, which set before the judge His divine claims to the loyalty of everyone, who recognises the sovereignty of truth. "Everyone who is of the truth heareth My voice,"

What an opportunity was here offered to Pilate! What infinite pains does not our Lord take with each individual brought face to face with Him in His sacred passion! In the Garden of the Agony He forgets the insult of the betrayer's kiss in His effort to throw Judas back upon his conscience, and so

to save him from the sins of treachery and deicide: in the court of Annas His one absorbing thought is to bring back that crafty man to a sense of his guilt, so as to win for his poor soul forgiveness. His one supreme desire in the presence of Caiaphas is to make the High Priest realise the sacred character of his office, and the terrible consequences of his transgression, should he refuse to repent. And now once more face to face with this Roman pagan, Pontius Pilate, our Lord's one and only thought seems to be how to woo and win the weak and worldly judge from the darkening thraldom of worldliness to the splendour of the light of truth. "Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice."

What a responsibility is free-will! Man is a free agent, and with his freedom our Lord will not interfere, still less will He force it. Our Lord did, no doubt, in some measure bring home to Judas, to Annas, to Caiaphas and to Pilate the awful fact that each one of them was responsible before his own conscience for the sin which was staining it, making it a guilty thing before its Maker, God: He showed to each one of them that the way to repentance was

yet open to them, but alas! they one and all turned their back upon the open door, refusing to pass into the light of truth—"loving darkness better than light, because their hearts were evil."

How did the sceptic Pilate answer our Lord's gracious invitation to embrace the truth? He answered that invitation as wordly men who are unprepared to make sacrifices for truth's sake usually answer it. He answered with a shrug of his shoulders, and the exclamation "What is truth?" As much as to say, "And who is capable of answering so speculative a question as this? I have no time for speculation. I am no philosopher, I am a practical man who has to deal with the logic of facts, and not with theories in the air. As for truth, what does it matter?" Pilate had seen too much of the world, and had heard too much of its jargon amid the pagans of Rome in his youth, and later on among the Jewish people themselves in Palestine, to believe much in the sacred character of truth. Life was too short to trouble about a theory which had little to do with practical politics, and might be better left, so he thought, to the schools of philosophy

with which he as Judge and Governor had nothing to do. Accordingly, much as he admired the beautiful theory put before him by Jesus Christ, he was not going to discuss its merits. He rose hastily from his throne, crossed the spacious hall, and attended by his guard, descended the marble flight of steps leading to the bema, where once again he faced the surging mob that stood breathlessly impatient to hear the death sentence which they expected to fall from his lips. But once more they were doomed to disappointment. Standing in defiant attitude with folded arms, before the sea of uplifted faces that glared with cruelty and savagery depicted in every feature, Pilate calmly and deliberately delivered himself of this sentence: "I find no fault in this Man." As he was saying it, our divine Lord was seen coming forth under custody from the prætorium balcony. The sight of Him was the signal for a simultaneous yell from the massed throng. Maddened by the gentle bearing of the innocent Lamb of God, so meek, so dumb, the infuriated mob leap from the ground as they shout themselves hoarse, swearing they will not be

robbed of their prey. When something like order is at length restored, the chief priests and ancients of the people bring forward fresh charges against Jesus; and they are resolved to keep on heaping up fresh charges, no matter how incredible they may seem, until there has been wrung from Pilate a favourable answer to their demand for the blood and the life itself of the divine Victim.

And where is Jesus all this time? He is standing beside His judge. Calm and dignified and silent He stands, His sacred head bent as though in prayer before the storm, before the hail of oaths and curses which rises up against Him from the mob below. He is altogether silent to the many things which priests and ancients clamour against Him. Jesus has nothing to say. This painful silence on the part of the accused was a novel experience for the judge—he could not understand it; to him it seemed unintelligible. Pilate turns with a look of wonderment in his eyes to Jesus Christ, dumb as a lamb before its shearers. He can detect no trace of passion or anger upon the calm and strangely beautiful face of the Prisoner. How is it possible, thinks Pilate, that a man with a record

such as Jesus of Nazareth is known to have, can remain unmoved, untouched by the storm of angry passion that sweeps with unabated fury over Him? At length growing impatient with the patience of our dear Lord, Pilate asks Him in an angry tone, "Dost Thou not hear how great testimonies they allege against Thee?" "Answerest Thou nothing?" "Behold in how many things they accuse Thee." As though he would say, "Is there to be no limit to this endurance? Defend Thyself and set the brutal mob at defiance."

The Roman Governor wants to draw forth from Jesus some line of defence which he himself may turn to account on behalf of the Prisoner, Whom he feels sure to be absolutely innocent of the volley of charges which they level against Him. But not even the judge himself can prevail upon the Man meek and humble of heart, to make reply. Jesus stands like one blind, deaf to all that is taking place. "He answered him not a word," as St Matthew puts it, "so that the Governor wondered exceedingly." Pontius Pilate is puzzled, how is he to act? Before him there is a sea of faces screaming out intimidating

cries, vomiting forth vile lies against the Prisoner; beside him stands the bowed and silent figure of the Saviour Himself, who offers no defence, who has nothing to say; nay, who treats all that is being said, as though it were the wail of the wind which no man heedeth.

Pilate can retain his seat no longer. He calls for silence, and once more rising before the people, in clear and articulate speech he tosses to them, defiantly, the declaration, "I find no cause in this Man."

Now is Pilate's opportunity. Were he a statesman and not a mere politician, a judge and not a diplomatist, a governor and not a compromiser, he would order the soldiers to clear the ground, to dismiss the rabble, and he would set the Prisoner, in Whom he finds no cause, free. Had he so acted, had he thus risen and responded to the dictates of his conscience, Pilate's name would have been carried down the ages greeted all the way with the acclamations of peoples paying honour to his great name. We ourselves should now be holding the name of at least one Roman Governor in gratitude and in benediction. Alas, the name of Pilate, with the names of so many

others in exalted positions, is found among men of lost opportunities. In a word, like all unprincipled men the Roman Procurator was a coward and not a man, and the people knew it. Accordingly, instead of being cowed to silence by the statement of the judge, the people rise up like a flood with a very torrent of fresh charges against our Lord, whom the Governor has but now declared to be innocent.

Pilate grows uneasy; he casts about for something to say with a view to calming this rising tide which threatens to overwhelm him. He feels baffled, baulked, and is at a loss how to act, when to his intense relief among the charges which quickly follow one another he catches the sound of the word: "He stirreth up the people teaching throughout all Judea beginning from Galilee to this place." "Galilee"—he turns to an officer asking quickly as he pointed to the Prisoner; "Is this Man a Galilean?" Receiving the answer that He is, he conceives a stroke of opportune policy. Being a Galilean Jesus belongs to the jurisdiction of Herod. Pilate has quarrelled with the miserable princeling, but what matters that if he can use him

for his own base purposes. Herod is up in Jerusalem for the Paschal season. He has, it is true, no jurisdiction in the city, but neither does that matter to Pilate, when it serves his turn to make use of him as his tool. The Roman Governor's line of policy then is this; to send Jesus Christ under the custody of a guard to the Court of Herod with the request that he will try the Prisoner, Who comes from the province over which Herod rules as Tetrarch. It is a diplomatic stroke and well calculated, as Pilate feels, to flatter Herod's vanity, while it will relieve him of the difficult position in which he finds himself. Pilate once more addresses the people, telling them of his resolve. Ordering a guard to conduct the Prisoner for trial to the Court of Herod, he leaves the bema, crosses the red paved court to mount the flight of steps leading to the prætorium, well pleased with himself for playing what he judges to be so clever a trick, so astute a stroke of policy.

With the interview between our blessed Lord and Herod I shall deal another Sunday. But before we separate to-day, I want you to concentrate your attention, on that pronouncement of the divine Prisoner which for all time defines

so clearly man's chief mission in this world. In the proclamation "For this was I born, for this came I into the world, that I should give testimony to the truth," the Master has defined, not merely His own mission but the work also to which each and every one of His followers is in his measure deputed, "Everyone that is of the truth heareth My voice."

How did Pilate accept our Lord's invitation to embrace the truth? Instead of answering it at all, as we have seen, he evaded it. In the estimation of the Roman Governor, truth is not possible in this world. There is no room for it in the push for place, the grab for riches, and the rush for honours. As a very practical people, I should like to ask you who move in Society, what answer you would have made to Jesus had you happened to be in Pilate's place? In a word I ask you, if you believe you were born for this; to know the truth and to bear witness to the truth? Many of you will tell me you do not believe in objective truth at all. Society proclaims that truth is what it feels, what it likes, what it says and what it does. "It is something entirely subjective, so that what may be a lie in one, may be truth

in another. It is a relative matter only."

Look at Society to-day—contrast it with the past. Half a century ago the word of an Englishman might have stood against the world. At that time the statement of a City merchant was his bond, and a boy's word of honour his oath. Alas! all that in a great measure is a departed state of things. I am ashamed to say it, but Society men and women too often do not even pause to reckon with truth. They will tell you life is much too short for attention to such details. Lately I have been reading the onslaught of an Anglican Bishop against such expressions as "Not at home"—"Very well, thank you"—"You are welcome"—"Yours affectionately," when these phrases do not really interpret the exact sentiments of the heart. The Bishop seems to regard them as sinful untruths. For my part I should not be so severe, I should define a lie to be a statement contrary to what is known to be true, uttered in order to deceive others, and accordingly I regard all such conventional expressions as "Not at home" etc., as negligible quantities. They are mere idioms of speech, and have no more

likelihood of deceiving than has a woman who, by mistake, gives her wrong age, or than an advertisement which forgets to say clearly: "It is your money that we want!" If people are to be severely blamed for using the ordinary language of civilised beings, I fear a good many of the Bishop's brothers on the bench will be found under the same condemnation as myself. I cannot say that I have any intention of giving up any of these so-called evil practices. To do so would mean spending half one's lifetime in the Law Courts!

No, it is not what are called white lies that I care particularly to denounce. Such things are little more than figures of speech; but I do condemn lies black as the "father of lies" himself.

For instance, I condemn very strongly indeed a practice growing among Society women of sometimes making themselves out to be very much poorer than they are in reality. Let me give an example of what I mean. A smart Society lady's child needing a serious operation, the mother took her to an oculist, pleading poverty, her husband, of course, having had nothing to do since the South African campaign. With tears, which

were as fluent as her lies, the poverty-stricken mother so touched the heart of my distinguished friend that he undertook to operate without a fee, putting the case on his list of charities. Personally, I was not surprised to hear what followed. It came to the knowledge of the specialist that the lady in question, who had a fine fortune of her own, was so pleased with her successful acting that she actually rewarded herself by the purchase of a new motor car! Now this woman not only defrauded the specialist of a very well-earned fee, but, what was perhaps even worse, she defrauded some really poor sister of a free operation, because there is, as there must be, a limit to the number of cases which even the most generous man, in that most generous class of men, physicians and surgeons, can undertake consistently with duties to home and family to perform for nothing. I charge the smart Society woman in question with telling a very deliberate lie, because she not only said what was contrary to what she knew to be the truth, to a man who had the clear right to know the whole truth, but, moreover, she told it with the intention of deceiving him. And that

woman was born to bear witness to the truth!

If I shall be told that the case cited is a very exceptional one, I answer; let the objector go to almost any other professional man, and he will, without difficulty, find ample contributions to the sordid list, from which I have quoted only a single instance. In other walks of life there is similar experience repeated. It is not an uncommon thing to hear in some fashionable establishments of a smart lady, when asked to pay long outstanding accounts, taking an oath that she has already long since paid them, or else she perhaps says, "Well, I will pay, but it will be the second time I shall have done so, and you may be sure I will not cross the threshold of your shop again." These things are of daily occurrence. I wish I could think that there exists at this hour the same fearless love of truth that was once so distinctive a badge of my countrymen. Not only do some people moving in Society tell lies, but they act them, till it would really seem that the truth was told only when the other thing was not ready.

We are often enough disposed to

blame Pilate, the Roman Procurator, as though he alone stood charged with indifference to truth. Alas! His is but a typical case—Pilate's conduct was not exceptional. Legion is the name of those who represent his conduct to-day in Society.

Expediency, compromise, and similar shifty subterfuges are now-a-days made to do duty for truth, which is relegated to the back benches of the school of psychology. Few, indeed, are they who recognise, as applying to themselves, the word of the Master: "For this was I born; for this came I into the world that I should give testimony to the truth."

The scene between Christ and Pilate is ever being re-enacted between the World and the Church, between the individual and his conscience.

And the end of it all is compromise with principle, compromise with truth. Those who are not trying, like Pilate, to get rid of Jesus Christ, are, at any rate, attempting, like Caiaphas, to deny His divine claims, or else, like Annas, they question His conduct, or perhaps, even like Judas, they do not even hesitate to sell Him to His enemies for gold.

Never was the love of gold such an all-absorbing passion as it is to-day. It is a positive worship, and the higher you ascend in the social scale, the more terribly dazzling seems to be the gold glitter. It is an intoxication, and those who fall under its spell become indifferent as does the drunkard to all other charms —to the ties of home, to the claims of honour, to the duties of life itself. The love of gold is of all bewitchments the most bewitching — it is an adoration. More people fall by its beauty than by the loveliness of woman. Hence we are warned by the Holy Spirit against its fascination.

"He that loveth gold shall not be justified, and he that followeth after corruption shall be filled with it." Listen again to this: "Many have been brought to fall for gold, and the beauty thereof hath been their ruin." And this: "Gold is a stumbling block to them that sacrifice to it; woe to them that eagerly follow after it." Lastly, remember this: "Every fool shall perish by it."

It matters little by what means you try to get rid of Jesus Christ, whether it be by the treachery of Judas or the

trickery of Annas, or the blasphemy of Caiaphas or by the diplomacy of Pilate, the state in which you leave yourself is much the same. It is a helpless and hopeless state, as we see only too plainly in our lessons from the Sacred Passion.

Pilate's case is full of soul-searching lessons for us. He got rid of Jesus Christ and of His teaching very deliberately. It is true that our Lord did come back to him—Pilate was given yet another chance of saving the Man in whom he could find no fault.

Alas, Pilate began with indifference to Truth, he went on to compromise with Truth, and finished as presently we shall see by the condemnation of Truth. Like Pilate, smart Society of to-day cares little for truth, and like him too it is prepared when under provocation to exclaim: "I find no cause of death in Him. I will chastise Him therefore and let Him go." Society makes the fatal mistake of adopting the Kantian theory of knowledge with its consequent teaching about vital and religious immanence. Hence its false theory of Revelation and of the origin of dogma and worship. Hence too its distinction

between the Church of History and the Church of Faith; the Christ of History and the Christ of Faith. The test of Truth is not feeling, it is reason. "*Magna est veritas et prævalebit,*" Truth is great and is triumphant—even when nailed to the Cross.

SCENE V

CHRIST BEFORE HEROD

CHRIST BEFORE HEROD

"And Herod with his army set Him at naught, and mocked Him, putting on Him a white garment, and sent Him back to Pilate."—St Luke xxiii, 2.

Pilate when he found himself freed from the responsibility of trying Jesus Christ rose to his feet heaving a sigh of relief. Our Lord's presence had made so strange an impression on him, while His conduct was so utterly unlike anything the Procurator had ever met during his experience on the bench as judge, that he felt it would have been no easy matter to deal with Him. Pilate stood like one rivetted to the balcony, his eyes the while eagerly following the wild tumultuous mob that pressed upon the heels of his soldiers in charge of the most strangely fascinating of human beings, Jesus of Nazareth. "What will become of Him?" thought Pilate as he closely watched the procession till it turned westward out of sight. Little did the Roman Procurator

dream that before two hours were passed, he himself would once more be face to face with Jesus, declaring Him innocent, yet treating Him as guilty—finding no cause in Him, yet condemning Him to death.

Here let me remind you who the Tetrarch was? He was a son of Herod the Great, who, among his other deeds of blood, had ordered the massacre of the innocent little ones in the hope thereby of murdering our Lord Himself. The Herod Antipas with whom we have now to deal inherited the Tetrarchy of Galilee after his father's death. He also inherited most of his father's vices, being cruel, crafty and sensual. Voluptuousness and sumptuousness summed up his ideas of happiness. In Antipas Herod, so we are told, were mingled the worst features of the Roman, the Greek and the Oriental. Never did a meaner or more miserable princeling sit upon a throne.

Much of his youth had been spent in Rome, where he had developed the Herodian taste for luxury and splendour. "Idleness and fulness of bread" gave him every opportunity of cultivating and strengthening all his worst passions. It was while he was in Rome that he made

love to his brother's wife, Herodias, and not long afterwards found an excuse—as easily as they do nowadays—for putting away his own wife, the daughter of Aretas, and he lived in adultery and incest with this scheming, intriguing, treacherous and vicious sister-in-law.

Herod the Tetrarch cultivated also another of his father's tastes. Like him he was a builder of palaces. Near the southern end of the lake to which the city lent its name, he created Tiberias, which we may describe as Rome and Athens in miniature. In the midst of those blazing splendours, within a palace called the Golden House, this semi-pagan Jew, this wretched, adulterous princeling Herod, lived with Herodias.

The woman his partner in guilt was destined to be the Tetrarch's scourge. It came about in this wise. The Baptist was preaching in the neighbourhood attracting immense crowds. Herod the restless, always thirsting for some new excitement, thought it might interest and amuse him and his Court not a little to hear the popular preacher whose fame was in the air. Accordingly he invited St John to give a discourse at the Golden House.

The Baptist was not a man to lose so splendid an opportunity of bringing Herod and Herodias face to face with their guilty consciences. He accepted without hesitation the royal command; he went to the Golden House.

What a strange scene on that occasion was it which met the eye of the spectator in that spacious marble hall of the palace! Was there ever seen such a contrast as that which presented itself when the Baptist, rough and shaggy, clad in hair-cloth, stood before the man and woman living in sin, surrounded by their courtiers all gay and giddy and gorgeous in brave attire? How that audience must have speculated as to what would be the subject of the Prophet's address! Little did they conceive what the theme was that filled the mind of the man of God as impatient to deliver His message as he was to turn his heels upon that gilded den of iniquity.

The burden of the sermon that rang like a cry of pain in the ears of the strange congregation assembled in that great hall to hear the Baptist was this: "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife."

I will not attempt to describe the effect

produced by the clear, calm, uncompromising attitude of the great preacher as he drove home his uncompromising message. Suffice it to say before the sermon was ended the Baptist was seen being led away in custody to be cast in chains into prison. There in the damp and filthy dungeon the man of God lingered in woeful want till the woman who had brought about his imprisonment asked for his head to be served to her on a silver dish.

Time does not permit me to tell the ghastly story at length. Briefly it was this. Herod was keeping his birthday. At night when he and his guests were surfeited with meat and wine, Herodias called upon her daughter Salome to dance before the king. As the concealed orchestra struck out voluptuous music, Salome sparingly clad, appeared amid a blaze of lights on the raised däis at the further end of the hall. She danced with a purpose to the drunken assembly. Before she had done, her charm and pirouetting had intoxicated the king even more than the wine. Maddened with passion, Herod offered to give the dancing girl, not his daughter, whatever she might ask, even if it were

half his kingdom. The wretched child, well schooled by her wicked mother, demanded to have brought to her at once the head of the Baptist on a dish. The order was given, the head was brought to her, and she in turn presented it to Herodias, exultant in her triumphant revenge upon the man who had dared to preach from the text "*Non licet*," "It is not lawful."

It was to this man whose hands were red with the blood of the Bridegroom's friend, it was to this Herod a murderer to whom that our divine Lord was sent by Pilate for trial. Oh, what must his sweet and blessed mother have thought when she heard that her only Son and her God was being dragged into the presence of this vileness?

Herod's town residence was not far from the prætorium. Perched on the north-east extremity of Sion, it was soon reached by crossing the bridge spanning the Tyropœan Valley. The palace was Grecian in style, square built and heavy looking, with an interior furnished to suit the taste of luxury-loving Herod.

The news that Pilate was sending him Christ the Nazarene for trial put the prince in exceeding good humour. It

was an opportunity to be made the most of. He summoned all his household to meet him in the great Grecian hall, where, encircled by a brave show of soldiers, he intended to try the Galilean Prisoner. Surrounded by this stately display, Herod, clad in all his glory and crowned with freshly-cut roses, reclined in studied ease upon the silken cushions deftly arranged upon the divan running at the back of the stage of the gorgeous Court House.

To judge from the merriment of the company, from its manner and bearing, it would seem that some light comedy were about to begin, although early morning was scarcely the fitting time for such entertainments. Alas! It was a terrible tragedy and no comedy, which that frivolous company was met to witness.

But stay, a procession of priests and ancients of the people, followed by Pilate's guard leading the divine Prisoner and jostled by an unruly mob of mad Orientals thirsting for His blood, is thrusting its way as best it may across the open yard leading into the Court House, into which everyone is trying to insinuate himself and to find standing room.

Presently on a raised platform where

all Herod's Court may see Him, Jesus Christ, garbed in the seamless robe dyed with blood and splashed with mud, stands, as so often we have imagined Him, majestically, meekly. His sacred Hands are tied behind His back, His divine Head, with its wealth of auburn hair all dishevelled and unkempt, is bent as though He were absorbed in prayer. On first mounting the platform Jesus for once lifts His eyes, but having surveyed the scene, He quickly closes them, as though oppressed by the revolting sight before Him.

St Luke tells us that "Herod, seeing Jesus, was very glad, for he was desirous for a long time to see Him, because he had heard many things of Him, and he hoped to see some miracle wrought by Him." Had Herod been what he was not, a serious or a contrite man, he would scarcely have relished the thought of meeting the murdered Baptist's best Friend. But then Herod was a frivolous, not a serious, man. He represents to us the voluptuous giddy world of dissipation, the world of fashion, if you will, the so-called Smart Set, for which there is no sin but that of being dull, for which there is no occupation but self, yes, gratification of self. Herod then was the representata-

tive of that world for which our Lord would not pray, of that world which loves darkness better than light, of that world which is described in the Gospel story as steeped in the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life.

And why was the worldly Herod so very glad to see the Holy One of Israel? In the first place he was glad, because it offered him a new excitement. Anything that could stimulate his jaded appetite was welcome to this foul, flabby, fleshly man who lived for low pleasures, "growing coarse to sympathize with clay." He had heard much of the Wonder-Worker: well could he remember hearing when he was a boy in his father's palace, of the massacre of the Innocents from which it was commonly reported the Infant Jesus had escaped by flight into Egypt. Later, when living at Tiberias as Tetrarch, Herod had been kept well posted up in the sayings and the doings of the young Rabbi whose fame was in the mouth of all Galilee where He was said to have wrought miracles! Herod's palace had been the resort of jugglers, actors, dancers and the like, and he had often wished he

could have found an excuse for enticing the Galilean Wonder-Worker to the Golden House where a performance set off with miracles would have afforded goodly sport and entertainment to his household; but the opportunity, till it was offered in this very exceptional way by Pilate, had never occurred. Now, however, Herod was in luck's way, for he felt sure, poor wretch, that our Lord would put forth His very best efforts to please and flatter him, so as to secure His looked-for freedom. Certainly it did occur to Herod that perhaps the Nazarene might possibly use the occasion much in the same way as the Baptist had used his, but then he thought it could not be, because, however wishful the Prisoner might be to drive home some spiritual lesson, He would hardly dare to do so with the consequences of the Baptist's rash and discourteous line of action fresh in His memory. Besides He was in the prime of life with a definite mission before Him.

Accordingly Herod, well pleased with himself, and with everybody and everything, opens proceedings by a long harangue to the divine Prisoner before him. He tells Jesus Christ that he is

favourably disposed to Him, that he has an open mind free from all sectarian prejudice and bigotry, and that he is fully conscious that, although the Prisoner may not have acted with the circumspection and prudence befitting their holy law, yet there was little doubt He had been generally actuated in His public life by the very best of motives, and Herod may even have cited as an instance the story of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes which, if it had been correctly reported to him, he felt sure was certainly intended as a benevolent and merciful act on the part of the Prisoner. Having gone out of his way to make it clear to our divine Lord that He was in the presence of a fair-minded, not to say an indulgent judge, Herod began to ply our Lord with many questions. St Luke says "he questioned Him with many words," meaning no doubt that the frivolous, frothy talker was endeavouring to create the impression that he was a man of versatile genius, one of wide reading and large sympathies. And so the talker went on talking till he could talk no more. He leaned back upon his couch of cushions refreshing himself with luscious grapes, while

waiting impatiently for some answer from the Prisoner to his many irrelevant questions.

Did our divine Lord hear all or anything at all of what Herod had said? I know not—all I know is this, He seemed to those about Him both deaf and dumb. Though He stood in the midst of that tinsel world of giddy gaiety and silly levity, Jesus seemed to be living in quite another world, to be breathing another atmosphere, paying absolutely no attention to what was going on, or to what was being said around Him. Herod's charge might have been addressed to some one else; it had no interest for Jesus Christ. So to all the questions put to Him by Herod, Jesus answered nothing.

It concerns us very much to know why Jesus answered nothing. When he was questioned by Annas, Jesus spoke, when interrogated by Caiaphas, Jesus spoke; when addressed by Pilate, Jesus spoke; nay, even when put a question by the rough, rude servant of the High Priest, Jesus spoke; why then would He not speak to Herod? From the time of His entering the Herodian Palace till He left it He opened not His mouth, He

spoke not. He remained dumb. Nothing perhaps in the whole course of the Sacred Passion is so striking as this unbroken silence of Jesus Christ before Herod. He is silent with a purpose; it is a silence that is meant to convey to the worldly-minded Herod a lesson which no language could have taught him.

In the first place our Lord wished to remind Herod that He was not going to give what is precious to dogs, nor to throw pearls before swine. Herod's state of soul was no more a fit receptacle for the words of the Master than was the soiled pavement of that court suitable for the seed of golden corn. Herod's mind was darkened too deeply by sin, his heart was fouled too much by sin, and his will weakened too much by sin, to be capable of deriving any good, or of drawing any salutary lesson from such words as our divine Lord under other circumstances might have addressed to him. Besides, our Lord's sympathy for sinners does not lavish itself upon the type of sinner represented by Herod. The Tetrarch was not one who through frailty, surprise, or passion had lost his balance and slipped into the mire of sin, but on the contrary, he had deliberately

gone down to the sea of iniquity, he had waded into it calmly, coldly, cruelly, reckoning up the cost. Herod is the type for all time of the smart Society man whose one and only idea of life is to think what he pleases, to say what he pleases, to do what he pleases, living as though there were no such thing as a conscience, and as though there was no God to demand an account of his stewardship. Accordingly our Lord had nothing to say to Herod. "*Tacebat*," He was silent.

What a strange contrast is here presented to us between the loquacious Herod and the silent Jesus! Herod apparently is so carried away by his own ready flow of questions, that he has quite forgotten the purpose for which our Lord was sent to him by Pilate. He has questioned the divine Prisoner upon every matter except the one bearing on the case that has been sent him for trial. Had he asked some question that was relevant, touching the charges that had been adduced by the Sanhedrim, our Lord might have vouchsafed him an answer. But the whole proceeding that morning in the court of Herod was so wanting in the seriousness and dignity demanded by a tribunal of justice that it

failed to appeal to our Lord, who seemed to see in it nothing more than the reflection of the levity of the frivolous-minded judge. Jesus therefore, as St Luke reminds us, answered him nothing. He had nothing to say.

And what lesson did Herod learn from this impressive silence of our divine Lord? He became too angry to learn any lesson at all from it. Never before had he been thus slighted, and in open court and in presence of such a brave assembly. Herod for once was put in his right place.

While Herod was growing livid with rage, turning to and fro upon his throne of cushions, the chief priests and the scribes, who stood by, kept up a continuous tale of charges against our Lord. We are not told what was the precise character of these fresh accusations invented for Herod's benefit against Jesus Christ. Doubtless these false witnesses were careful to remind the judge that our Saviour had oftener than once gone out of His way to speak in the very highest terms of John the Baptist, while He had been heard to speak of the Tetrarch himself insultingly, calling him "that fox." And then there doubtless followed a long catalogue of

such charges as the priests and scribes thought would carry most weight with a judge of Herod's type.

Our divine Lord listened with bowed head to this shocking discord of accusations that was being hurled against Him. His Sacred Heart was pained as He noticed the gross miscarriage of justice that was permitted in the sacred name of law. But He said nothing. "*Tacebat.*" He remained silent.

And in what sense did Herod and his Court interpret the silence of Jesus Christ? What did they see in this awful silence, from which the ages have learnt such terrible lessons? Well, we are told by the Evangelist that "Herod with his soldiers despised Him and mocked Him." It was perhaps but natural that a man like Herod, with an inordinate sense of his own importance and his own power, should have thought our divine Lord a mere fool, to have acted as He had done. If, instead of holding His peace and saying absolutely nothing in His defence, our Lord, on the contrary, had freely met the inquisitive mood of Herod, had gladly answered his questions, solved his problems, and gratified generally his idle

curiosity; if moreover He had, besides, condescended to have wrought a miracle or two for the sake of exciting the gaping wonderment of Herod and his Court, why Jesus would, without doubt, have been acquitted, His mission would have been applauded, and He would have been sent back to Pilate by Herod, loaded with gifts and honours. Herod, of course, considered that Jesus of Nazareth had maintained a surly silence, either because He was unable to meet the questions put to Him or to work any miracle at all; or else, perhaps He was silent, because He had not wit enough to recognise the value of the chance of acquittal offered to Him. In either case, He was a fool, thought Herod. "The foolish things of this world has God chosen to confound the wise, and the weak things of this world has He chosen to confound the strong."

And now let us see what we ourselves may learn from this interview between our Blessed Lord and Herod. The present hour of the world's history does not so much differ in many things from that in the Grecian hall of Herod's palace, long ago. If Jesus were to come to London to-day, Society would be quite as anxious

to see Him as Herod was, and for no better reason, namely, because it "had heard many things of Him" and because it would expect that in its august presence He might be almost sure to work what the vulgar would call a miracle. At best, Society is but a poor, petty, paltry show, while at worst it is a lying, vicious, diabolical intrigue. Its curse seems to be the way it loves darkness better than light; in fact, treating as vulgarities whatever speaks of duty, of sin, of death, or the judgment to come. Accordingly that section of Society which represents Herod would pretend it wanted to see Jesus Christ from motives which in reality had never crossed the threshold of its feeble mind. We cannot forget how Society, represented by Herod, treated the Master, despising Him, mocking Him! But what else is to be expeeted from people who despise and mock one another?

How intensely Society women seem on occasions to envy one another! I do not know of a more pathetic sight than that presented by a beautiful woman, beautifully accoutred, in beautiful pose, pouring forth a lava of fiendish abuse of some other woman, whose chief

offence in reality is, that her pearls weigh heavier than her own, or that she happens to be more popular in Society than she herself is. She is a rival, and her life must be made a burden! Again how pitiable, not to say how cruelly wicked it is, for a mother to treat her *débutante* daughter as sometimes is done —dressing her badly, treating her badly, detracting her badly, and all because she is younger and prettier than nature allows her mother to be! In a former sermon I said that many women think more of their pet dogs than of their children. Since then I have heard that one lady has declared she could never come and hear me again! "The brute dared call my pug a little beast." Will not this growing practice of lavishing upon animals, love which should be bestowed on husband and child, bring some terrible curse with it? During the past week a woman, who was taking her poodle to a "dog-party," began to speak in French about the little beast in her arms. When asked why she did so she answered, "This darling little child of mine understands every word I say when I speak in English, and you know I should not like him to grow up

vain like his sister Bertha." And yet this very woman, who was wearing a plume torn from some living bird, did not realise that she was not only making a melancholy exhibition of herself, bringing downright shame upon her sex, but that she was also giving the only right explanation of her want of love and care for her children and her household. While these degrading practices are on the increase, the birth-rate, as is inevitable, is on the decrease, while infant mortality has already reached one-fourth of the total number of deaths in the year. And drinking, if it is less prevalent among men, is most certainly more frequent among women. We all know how mental deficiency is growing in our midst, and how blindness, and nervous diseases, such as locomotor ataxy with general paralysis, are becoming sadly more and more common. I do not care to enter into the causes in too many cases. I read in a work sent to me this last week that "wealthy business men, and men of leisure are in the main impure," and that women of the same class hold conversations which imply more than I allow myself to express. Is it so? No matter how outspoken I

may have been in these matters, I have never made so sweeping a charge as that. Those who have made the calculation inform us that with the exception of some towns in Catholic Ireland, the large cities of Great Britain are morally on the down grade. Ireland—God bless her—still gives the Empire pure women, brave men, and Ireland, let it be noted, is the most Catholic country with the most Catholic capital in Christendom.

Let us try, before too late, to realise the state of things in our midst. It seems to me that England, united with France in this present *entente cordiale* embrace, is on a slimy, slippery incline, which must end, if we do not look to our moral standards speedily, where the Bible tells us it will end — in "the bottomless pit." Is it not a preacher's first duty to warn his hearers against the evils that are in their midst? Surely when we hear of any physical disease about to menace the well-being of the country, we sound a note of warning. Yes, but a priest may not warn if the evil threatened is a moral one only! I intend to warn and to sound the rallying cry, and to call upon all the brave men

and pure women of England to save their country from deserving to be called on the Continent "Europe's nursery of vice." Talk of France, of Spain, of South America; be sure we can match them. If there were to be an international prize for vice, I much fear it would be carried off by the world's Metropolis—London.

Is there any form of vice that has ever been heard of or read of, that is not to be found in this vast city? It is the playground of vicious Europe. The life that was lived by Herod and Herodias is not without its faithful copies within this city of Mammon. The laws of the Golden House still obtain a sanction in some Society. Worldly minded Society, of course, resents being told the truth; it much prefers going its own way, making the most of its hour of unwholesome life, setting at naught the word of warning, learning nothing at all from the trial scene before Herod and his household. Living for time and sense carries with it its own punishment!

What miserable, jaded, worn-out voluptuaries these women gone to the dogs look!

I am told that, whilst I draw attention to the evils in our midst, I do not prescribe a remedy. If inane women, who spend more money on the wardrobes and jewel-cases of their pampered Pomeranian pets than they do upon their *débutante* daughters, do not see for themselves their own wickedness, no mirror that I could lift up to their souls would show it them. Is it because of their silliness or wickedness that they have no eyes with which to see the Great Physician in our midst? They have but to approach Him, to consult Him, and to follow out His prescription, and even they may become sane.

To my fellow Catholics I say, put your trust in Jesus Christ, be strong in the Faith, strong in the practice of it, and lead the way you are *expected* to lead! Yes, though our non-Catholic friends may smile at our credulity, in their heart of hearts they know Faith means living in trust, living on authority —believing what we ourselves cannot prove—and they expect us to live up to our Catholic principles. Live up to them then, I say, and by word and example encourage all around you to

live up to them. Take warning from Herod, and most of all take warning from the silence of our Lord, Who to the many questions put Him by Herod, answered him nothing. The worst thing that can happen to any man is to be treated by Jesus Christ with silent contempt. If He treats you now with silent contempt, it can only mean that when He does speak it will be in language which will ring out through the chambers of your soul for ever and for ever.

There was some slight show of excuse for Herod's life of sin. Heredity was against him, evironment was against him, example was against him—He came from a tainted source and evil was rampant within him—what chance had he of going straight, what help had he for the cultivation of self-knowledge, self-reverence, and self-control? He started life on the wrong road and it was the road to ruin—he kept on it, going the pace, and hence when an opportunity of putting his soul right with God was offered to him, instead of embracing it he resented it as an insult and went on to murder the very man sent him by God for his peace and salvation. Nay, he ended by treating our Lord Himself

as a fool, mocking Him and setting Him at naught. Are not dog-worshipping women doing much the same?

I say it would be easier to find excuse for Herod and his partner in sin, than it would to plead the cause of Society, which has so many opportunities in a Christian land such as this of living lives worthy of the grand traditions of our country. But we have ceased to appreciate our traditions; the old codes of honour, and those unwritten laws that once gave so fine a character to the English home and made the name of our countrymen a synonym for all that was honourable, straight and manly, have passed away from us. We are living in a day when nobody who is anybody seems to care at all for what his forefathers prized so highly. It is money that you want, and unless you possess it you are worthless as a dishonoured cheque. But if you are backed up by wealth, then you may buy up a nobleman's estate, become member for your adopted county, purchase a place in the Upper House, and command anything upon which you have set your ambition. Is there anywhere a lock in the wards of which the golden key will not sooner or later turn easily, readily?

The man with money, I say, is irresistible in Society in England to-day. He actually leads it, and vulgarian though he be, his presence is in request, and his moods studied as though he were a Bayard come to life again.

Society, being at present made up largely of rich vulgarians with no family traditions, with no inherited code of honour, with none of those indescribable somethings that make people sensitive without being touchy, that put people as much at their ease with peasant as with prince, has ceased to have that influence upon the country which for so many centuries it exercised.

Society is fast becoming a mere crowd of rich people competing for the first prizes in a social show. Even the old shooting party is now being turned into a Society function. Take up and read any account in any family record of the house parties and their doings in the grouse season but a generation ago, and you will very readily see why the stuff which once went to make up a typical English gentleman is becoming a thing difficult to find. We are losing grit, fibre, nerve, endurance, daring and enterprise. Where to-day is the Society man who

wants to ride to the moors and then to tramp for miles over them in pursuit of his birds? He is not to be found. Instead you have your would-be sportsman conveyed in a luxurious motor car within easy access to the butt from which he is to bring down the birds that will be driven by the energies of paid beaters across his line of fire. It would be far too much trouble for the gentleman himself to reload, and so there he remains comfortably housed with nothing to do till luncheon hour but to lift his gun loaded for him, to mark his bird and fire. Luncheon like the rest of the day is a feast in luxurious idleness, and when the day is done, our sportsman is motored home well pleased with the number of brace that has been placed to his credit, flattering himself he has had a good day's sport and proved himself the best shot in the county.

I do not pretend it is a crime to be a millionaire, though, as it has been said, it is not easy to become one and play the game of life fairly, but what I do not hesitate to denounce and condemn is the introduction into the social life of England of so many disturbing and disintegrating practices which obtain

wherever the millionaire is allowed to set the *ordre de jour.*

Money is much but it is not everything, and where it tends to substitute effeminacy for manliness, luxury for enterprise, idleness for labour, and selfishness for altruism, it becomes a curse. I do not hesitate to say that it is money that has spoiled if not actually ruined what ought to be our Empire's best Society to-day. On the fingers of your two hands you may count the stately homes in England to which money without other higher distinction is no introduction. Hold to your principles, I exclaim, to these upholders of the old tradition; fall not down before the Golden Calf. Better, nobler far, entertain your poor relations and your neighbours among whom God has placed you.

Luxurious living, with all the passions that it lets loose and the selfishness that it creates, soon leads its victims into the ways and pastimes by which Herod Antipas came to utter moral ruin. The catastrophe is almost inevitable. Once you give up self-knowledge, self-combat will go, and then not self-conquest but self-ruin will follow inevitably.

Alas, what a lesson we have before us

in Herod's conduct with his own brother's wife, Herodias, in his treatment of the Baptist, in his drunken oath to Salome, in his murder of St John, and finally in his arrogance and mad folly before our blessed Lord Himself. Is Herod still in our midst, or is it that his spirit has not departed from that world of folly and of luxury which, with intellect darkened, heart sullied, and will weakened by self-centred indulgence in sin, is even still laughing to scorn all that is serious and sacred in life? Remember the words: "And the Chief Priests and Scribes stood by earnestly accusing Him;" remember the word: "Herod with his soldiers despised Him, putting on Him a white garment;" but above all remember the word: "Jesus answered him nothing."

SCENE VI

CHRIST BEFORE THE PEOPLE

CHRIST BEFORE THE PEOPLE

"His Blood be upon us and upon our children."
—St Matt. xxvii, 25.

We read that during our Lord's trial Pilate's wife sent him word to have nothing to do with that just Man, Jesus Christ; and it is likely enough that while our Lord was absent in Herod's Court, Pilate and Claudia were exchanging their views about the divine Prisoner. Perhaps it was during this conversation that Pilate was handed the sealed letter from the Tetrarch, informing him that he could come to no conclusion about the Culprit sent to his Court, and consequently that he was sending Him, with many compliments, back to a Governor whom he felt sure would make short shift with Him. Before Pilate realises the situation, the shouts and the yells of the returning procession tell him that our Lord is actually on His way back to the Prætorium. Yes, sure enough, as Pilate can see from his balcony, there, on the

western steep incline facing his palace, a veritable mob, a tangle of colour, comes swinging down like a mountain torrent let loose and meaning mischief.

Pilate, not a little disconcerted, pulls himself together, sets his teeth, and rising from his seat, steps impatiently upon the balcony where he stands with folded arms, glancing down upon the people with defiance expressed in every feature. When after a time the hissing mob has exhausted its cries, the judge makes his proposal. Being the festival season, he offers to release to them Barabbas, the murderer, or Jesus, the Christ. For a moment there is hesitation among the people, but after some parley with the chief priests and ancients, like a tornado comes the cry, "Not this Man, but Barabbas." "What then," asks the miserable compromiser, "will you that I do to the King of the Jews?"

The Jews, having become conscious that the game is in their own hands, and that the judge is a coward, at the top of their voices scream forth exultantly their verdict, "Crucify Him, crucify Him." The judge timidly insists that he can find no cause in Him, but the people will not have it, declaring they have a

law, "and according to the law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God." Once more the uneasy judge holds conversation with the divine Prisoner, with the result that he makes a yet more terrible compromise, saying, "I find no cause of death in Him. I will chastise Him therefore and let Him go."

Here for a moment I must ask you to pause whilst I remind you of what our dear Lord endures mentally when He hears that, as no fault can be found in Him, He is to be condemned to the lash. It is not so much the thought of being scourged in public, or even of being stripped naked in the sight of all, which is for Jesus so hard to bear, but rather that a judge, whose mission it is to hold the scales of justice, should so far forget the majesty of the law and the rights of a prisoner, that in one and the same breath he can pronounce Him to be innocent and treat Him as though guilty, inflicting on Him the most cruel and ignominious of punishments.

What a punishment! The mere anticipation of it in the Garden had forced from His human soul the cry, "O Father, if it be possible, let it pass."

Even as we, the humble followers of the Crucified, after the lapse of so many centuries, reverently contemplate the scene of the scourging, it is difficult to understand how our divine Lord could have submitted to the agony and ignominy of it.

If the Passion can teach us nothing else, at any rate it tells us this, that none of us really knows what real love is. Is it an impulse gone mad? But come down to the courtyard of the palace where each one of you may be forced to witness the scene about to be enacted.

"Behold the Lamb of God Who taketh away the sins of the world," in the midst of a gang of ruffians like a pack of hounds clamouring for its prey. See that broken column in the centre of the courtyard; the crowd is jostling its way there, where Jesus is to be stripped to nakedness in the sight of the surrounding multitude still crying for His Blood. And now look closer still. The Sacred Hands that have so often been raised to bless and to heal, are being actually bound by cords, drawing them upward to an iron ring which holds them rigidly in such a position that the Sacred Feet scarcely touch with their toe-tips the

white pavement so soon to be dyed red with blood.

And now there rises a yell and shout from the people greeting the appearance of two strong-built soldiers who, stripped to the waist, running through their fingers the knotted cords, presently lift them to swing through the air, till down with a thud they come upon the quivering flesh of the Son of God. On they go, lash after lash, every stroke lapping the flesh and drawing blood till it is seen streaming down the Sacred Limbs, pouring itself about the ankles, while the surrounding mob is beside itself, drunk with delight. How many moments this most terrible of terrible scenes lasted I know not; but this I do know, that as it was inflicted, not with a view to punishment, but with the object of awakening pity for Jesus, the savage cruelty of it no language can describe. Perhaps some man in that throng more merciful than the rest, fearing the worst results, rushes in, cuts the rope, when Jesus falls, slipping along the pavement in a pool of warm blood.

And now, you votaries of pleasure, who proclaim so loudly that there is no such thing as sin, will most probably

call upon me to have done with this realistic picture, saying, "You are offending every canon of good taste, you are forgetting every rule of fine art. Pass from this scene of blood which blinds our sight, wounds our hearts, and stings our conscience." But I tell you I will not have done with this picture of Jesus Christ all broken and bruised from the soles of His feet to the top of His head, lying half dead, white and ruddy in a stream of His blood, till you yourselves come to acknowledge that in the sight before you, you recognise the handiwork of your own sin. If you insist that this flagellation is meant to awaken the pity of the Jews, I declare to you it is endured by Jesus Christ to create a clean heart in you Christians; these pains are borne in the body of Christ to atone for your pleasures of the flesh. Yes, and that crown of thorns which is being so rudely pressed upon the Sacred brow is being worn in contrition for your sins of pride and vanity. Nay, the Sacred eyes are blindfolded and that mock sceptre is being placed in the gracious hand to make reparation for those sins of sight and of touch in which you have so freely indulged.

In the scene then before us I see the divine Penitent offering to Heaven an act of reparation for your vicious pleasures in the concupiscence of the flesh, in the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life.

"Then the soldiers of the Governor taking Jesus into the hall gathered unto Him the whole band, and stripping Him they put a scarlet cloak about Him. And plaiting a crown of thorns they put it on His Head, and a reed in His right hand, and bowing the knee before Him they mocked Him saying, 'Hail, King of the Jews,' and spitting upon Him, they took the reed and struck His Head."

Truly it is an evil and a bitter thing to offend God!

And now the scene changes. Pilate is once more standing before the people. He vainly imagines that the condition of abject misery and shame to which his cowardice has brought our dear and blessed Lord will evoke cries of awe and pity from the mob. Accordingly he orders the Prisoner under arrest to be brought forth, where with the full light of the morning sun flashing on His symbols of mock royalty all may have a

good view of Him. As Jesus draws nigh Pilate addresses the mob; "Behold!" he exclaims pleadingly, "I bring Him forth to you that you may know I find no cause in Him." "*Ecce Homo.*" "Behold the Man."

Alas! no sooner do they catch sight of our Lord with the purple rag and the mock sceptre and crown, than there rings clamorously forth through the air the people's well-schooled cry, "Crucify Him, crucify Him."

Here once more we must pause while I borrow from Pilate the word, "Behold the Man." Behold Him Who is more than a man but Whom you have treated as less than one. Behold the Man once the most beautiful, in Whom now there is no beauty nor comeliness; Whom your sins have changed into a leper and as it were one struck by God, the most abject of men, "a Man of sorrows and acquainted with infirmity." As you gaze upon Him, scanning His broken frame, counting up His wounds, dismayed by His misery, you may well exclaim: "We will not have this Man to reign over us. Truly there is in Him no sightliness, that we should be desirous of Him."

But once more let us "Behold the

Man," remembering that He is "wounded for our iniquities and is bruised for our sins; the chastisement of our peace is upon Him, and by His bruises we are healed." Did I not tell you that, in spite of appearances, He is more than a Man? He is God Himself thus disguised in order to woo and win your love. Behold Him, He is pleading with you saying, "If you will not love Me for what I am in Myself, at least love Me for what I am to you. Say not 'I am nothing to You,' when you are so much to Me: you are to Me more than My life. Love is self-giving and Love is self-sacrifice. If you plead for some one to love you, 'Behold the Man,' I am the Man Who in love as in everything else, is without an equal. 'Behold the Man' Who, regardless of consequences, offers Himself to be lashed and torn to pieces, reckoning it as nothing at all, if only you will slake His love-thirst for His creatures made to His image and likeness, made to be happy with Him in His Home everlasting."

I will not stay to hear your answer to this most pathetic appeal from our divine Saviour. We must pass on to listen to the poor weak and timid judge

who, frightened by the noise of the people, is exclaiming, "Take Him and crucify Him, for I find no cause in Him." But the Jews argue better than does the timid Roman; "We have a law," they reply, "and according to the law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God." Why does not Pilate demand proof of their assertions? True, Jesus Christ does claim to be the Only-Begotten Son of God, He does demand the unswerving allegiance of His creatures; He declares He can take no second place in their affections, He proclaims His universal sovereignty. He is King, and Priest, and Judge, and as He has proclaimed in the court of Caiaphas, on the Last Day He will come in the glory of God, to reward the just with everlasting life, and the wicked with everlasting punishment.

If Pilate is conscious that these and nothing less are the claims of Jesus Christ, let him investigate His claims and satisfy himself about their worth; so that he may have evidence on which to pronounce a verdict, affirming His innocence or declaring His guilt.

Is this state trial then, which is being held in the name of the Roman Law,

merely a mock trial like those already played out in the ecclesiastical Courts? Yes, all four trials are mere travesties of justice, the majesty itself of the great Roman Law being prostituted to the basest uses. What happened to our Lord has been the experience of His Bride, the Church, for well nigh two thousand years. Nay, this very week leading Society journals, the clearest expression of present-day worldliness, have spoken of Christ's Vicar, Pius the Tenth, in terms which might have been borrowed from Annas or Caiaphas, Pilate, or even Herod.

These pressmen have gone even beyond those time-serving judges, for forgetful of all history and of all false prophecies in the past, they have prophesied to the world the downfall of the Church, almost promising in their next issues to publish the date of Her death and of Her burial.

Unfortunately for the world, represented by the secular press, the Church cannot die in order to gratify the whims of false prophets; Her mission is for all time as well as for all men. Hence the words "the gates of hell shall not prevail" against My Church.

The world is ever the same; her sight is limited to the things of time and sense, her judgments, like those of Pilate, are based on expediency and compromise.

In regard to the things of God, to the kingdom of grace, the world is in Egyptian darkness. It reminds us of Pilate, who wondered how Christ forebore to trust him and to throw Himself entirely upon his mercy, saying to the silent Jesus, "Speakest Thou not to me? Knowest Thou not that I have power to crucify Thee, and I have power to release Thee?"

Poor Pilate, how ignorant he is where he is most assured! Has rank and position so obscured with self-woven clouds the light of heaven, that he forgets the existence of One in Whose presence the whole wide world is less than a dewdrop on the rose-leaf? Our dear Lord, with a look of pity, turns to Pilate, reminding him of what he seems for the moment to have forgotten, that he is a mere creature wholly dependent upon God for the very breath of his life.

"Thou shouldst not have any power against Me, unless it were given thee

from above." What volumes might be unfolded from this pregnant text? In what abundance of peace the restless world of fashion might soon find itself, if it could but bring itself to recognise that nothing can happen to it without divine permission. To know that what is not ordained by God is permitted to befall us; because, being infinite in resources, He, though none other, knows how to draw good out of evil. Against the taunts and threats of tyrannical pagan judges many a Christian martyr has possessed his soul in wondrous peace because of his remembrance of the text: "Thou shouldst not have any power against Me, unless it were given thee from above."

So long as the conscience is clear and the line of action is clear to the God-fearing man, no matter what may happen, he feels "It is all right. God knows, and He will see me through."

How did Pilate receive our Lord's teaching? Did he act upon the advice offered by our divine Master?

We are told that the judge learnt his lesson so far that he "henceforth sought to release Him." There was Pilate's mistake. Instead of trying, hoping,

seeking to release Jesus, he should have actually cleared the court of the mob and set the divine Prisoner free. But Pilate was a man of lost opportunities.

The Jews, quick to recognise the irresolution of Pilate, try to overrule his will, and carry their point by the taunt, "If thou release this Man, thou art not Cæsar's friend, for whosoever maketh himself a king, speaketh against Cæsar."

Pilate, stung by the bitter taunt, exasperated by the cruel threat, answers nothing, but, rising to his feet, paces forward to the judgment seat. There enthroned on the Gabbatha and pointing to Jesus Christ, a spectacle to men and to angels, he exclaims, with a gesture and look of contempt and derision, "Behold your King." But the mob, in no mood for the irony of one whom they had come to despise, shout back, "Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him." Pilate having lost, together with self-respect, all self-control, knows not what to answer them. He can only say for the want of something better, "Shall I crucify your King?" It is the last word; the time-serving, place-loving judge has given up the case. The law is nothing, the mob

everything. "And their voices prevailed."

In triumph the whole people exclaim, "We have no king but Cæsar."

That being so, Pilate has nothing further to do but to deliver Jesus Christ to them to be crucified; and as he does so he calls for water and washes his hands before the people, exclaiming, "I am innocent of the blood of this just Man, look you to it." The trial scene closes with the triumphant shout of a nation proclaiming "His Blood be upon us, and upon our children."

To us who reverently, after a lapse of nearly two thousand years, study the trial of Christ, how terribly real and actual it seems! What is so terrible about it is this, that it is being repeated over and over again with much the same result in England, in London; and, what more nearly concerns you and me, in Mayfair where we are living. Smart Society of to-day is still exclaiming with their friends the Jews, "We will not have this Man to reign over us." The threat held out to their consciences is still the same as that with which Pilate was menaced: "If thou release this Man, thou art not Cæsar's friend." And

finally, as all the world knows, these fashionable votaries of pleasure to whom I refer still proclaim by the lives they lead, by the pastimes they practise, by the sensuality in which they indulge, by the luxuries in which they wallow, by the blasphemies which they utter, "We have no king but Cæsar." They crucify the Son of God anew by lives for which there is less excuse than there was for those of Annas, Caiaphas, Pilate, and Herod.

And it would seem from the daily record, given in social organs, of the doings of smart Society people and from what we know of the literature in which they delight, from the plays to which they resort and from the pleasures in which they revel, that their cry too is the cry which swept like a blight from the children of Israel on the first Good Friday when they howled, "His blood be upon us, and upon our children."

And so, as we read, "their voices prevailed," and Pilate "delivered Him to them to be crucified." Then like a pack of hounds let loose upon their prey, the mob sprang upon our blessed Lord, and tearing from His bleeding wounds the insignia of mock royalty they put

His own garments on Him and led Him out to be crucified.

See Him dumb like a lamb before its shearers, while the instrument of His torture, the Cross, is laid upon His shoulder whereon so often His Mother's head had found shelter and repose.

What a sight is this! Our God Almighty reduced to the ignominy of a felon, dragging across the city of His adoption the cursed symbols of degradation and disgrace! Can nothing less than this teach man the value of suffering? Until he sees before him the Cross galling the bleeding shoulder of his Saviour, will he steadfastly refuse to take up his own and follow Him? Do we shrink so instinctively from pain that, but for this sight seen on the Via Crucis, we could never bring ourselves to believe in its healing properties? It would seem indeed to be so, for no sooner does man begin to lose sight of Jesus Christ bearing His Cross than he himself begins to grow restless under the smaller one which he is called to carry after Him. And yet life itself is a cross, so that the only choice that man is called upon to make is whether he will take it up and bear it onward on the right or on

the left of His crucified Saviour. The choice is between Gestas and Dismas. If he uses his trials rightly, they will draw out all that is best in a man, they will purge him of sin, they will strengthen him in grace, they will elevate his thoughts beyond the realms of time and sense, they will spiritualize his life, and best of all, they will build up in him the Christ-like character, with the motto, "Greater love than this no man hath." Whereas if he shirks his cross and trials, if he becomes restless under the yoke, if he tries by every means in his power to rid himself of what nature so much dislikes, then will man become a mere worldling, a poor and craven creature without grit or spirit, or enterprise for Heaven. Remember the word has gone forth which shall never pass away, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow Me."

Observe well that the Cross which our sins laid upon the shoulder of our blessed Lord was heavier than He could bear. He, the Almighty, fell under the crushing burden, and so His murderers forced one Simon of Cyrene, who was passing by, to help Him to

carry it. Little did the father of Alexander and Rufus realise the privilege of his calling.

Sometimes in our better moments we are disposed to envy the honour conferred upon the man of Cyrene, and we perhaps persuade ourselves that, had we been in his position, we should have needed no forcing into that cross-bearing service. But let me ask, do our lives warrant this interpretation which so freely we put upon them? Were we as ready to help our dear and blessed Lord as we proclaim to be, perhaps we should make less of our own crosses, none too heavy for us, and certainly we should not so easily forget the words — "Whatsoever you do to the least of My little ones, you have done it unto Me."

Our mission in this twentieth century is to help Jesus Christ by offering service to our less favoured brothers and sisters, who are struggling under burdens heavy almost beyond endurance, along the dark and lonely lanes of penury and want. Alas! alas! and woe! woe! how blind we are, how deaf we are to the tragic scenes in our own immediate environments. Are there not tens of thousands in this city clam-

ouring for bread, are there not thousands by the score clamouring for work, and are there not thousands by the hundred clamouring for sympathy? If only our ears were attuned to this chorus of voices beating in upon us like the wail of the wind, and the sob of the sea, we would, I feel sure, open our hands, and open our hearts, stretching forth the whole of our being to respond to the cry of humanity, pleading for help under its crushing burdens. But we are, I much fear, too self-centred, and it suits us better to lose sight of what is wanted of us here and now, to gaze in gaping wonderment across a chasm of two thousand years, marvelling at the short-sightedness of Simon of Cyrene, who failed to recognise the privilege accorded him.

We are not altogether unlike that great multitude of people and of women who "bewailed and lamented Jesus Christ." That mighty throng seeing His abject misery, His pitiful condition, all weary, worn, and broken, pressed about Him, following Him with tears and cries along the toilsome way to Calvary.

Look up and bend your eyes upon

them. Behold! there is a pause, the procession halts, and Jesus, the Self-forgetful, turning to the crowd, so loud in the piercing cries of its lamentation, utters a word of warning good for us to remember: "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not over Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children." If only the people of the city, that knew not the day of its visitation, had foreseen in prophetic vision what so soon was to befall themselves, their children, and their country, they would indeed have called out to the mountains: "Fall upon us," and to the hills: "Cover us." But instead of being occupied with the thought of their own personal guilt, and of lamenting it with purpose of amendment, they were thinking of the sin of others, and were bewailing its vengeance upon the Person of Jesus the Nazarene. It is indeed well for us to follow our Lord through every stage of His Sacred Passion with tears of sympathy and prayers of gratitude, but there is a duty more pressing still than this, and it is that of weeping over our own sins which have needed so great a redemption, and of resolving so to shun sin and the occasions of it, that we may

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in some measure at least make up, as St Paul puts it, what was wanting in the Passion of Christ.

If ever there was a period in the history of our country when there was occasion for weeping over it, that period is the one in which we ourselves are living. Is this England of ours a Christian land in any real and true sense? Is there not some reason for fearing that we are living in the after-glow of Christianity? Outside the Catholic Church are not the ties of Christianity being almost everywhere loosened? Is not its dogmatic teaching being almost universally ridiculed, while its moral obligations are just tossed to the winds as though worthless as the dust in our streets? Are not congresses declaring constantly that the education of our children must be free and secular, that the Word of Christ must be banished from the schools, and that not a penny of the rates and taxes should be spent on "cramming dogmas down the throats of children?" Do we not recognise around us a spirit of discontent with all that is, with Society as at present constituted, and with religion as identified with politics, or with the State?

I will not refer to the desecration of the marriage bond, nor to the destruction of home life, nor to the prevention of child-bearing, nor to the other social and domestic horrors, which all go to prove incontestably that the Christianity of Christ is ceasing to be the leaven which alone can spiritualise now, as it spiritualised in the past, England our Fatherland.

But let me rather emphasise particularly, what still more clearly will bring home to some of you, why we have reason now more than ever to weep for ourselves and for our children. I do not mean the fact merely of the prevalence of the New Theology, in which there is little theology and nothing new, nor the promulgation of the tenets of Christian Science, in which there is neither savour of Christianity nor relish of Science, but I refer rather to the spirit of Socialism which is threatening to become in this country a cult, to its anti-militarism, and to what I must call, its anti-patriotism. Where there is loss of the true character of Christianity, there too must be wanting the true spirit of patriotism, and where there is lack of patriotism, there you will look

in vain for loyalty to the throne. In many more senses than one England would seem to be on the down grade.

It would be well if we took the warning betimes, before we shall have reason to cry out to the mountains, "Fall upon us;" and to the hills, "Cover us." There is, I repeat, one Name, and one only, in which we can recover ourselves and find salvation, and it is the Name of Jesus. Let us break from our frivolities and irreligion, and weeping for our past of which we have reason enough to be heartily ashamed, let us follow Him to Calvary, where, at length about noontide with the sun beating fiercely upon His gaping wounds, our dear Lord and Saviour arrives, weary with the journey, spent from want of food, athirst from loss of blood. Give Him not to drink what the soldiers offer, "wine mingled with myrrh," but present Him from your hearts the pure wine of pure love, that it may strengthen and may comfort Him in His last hours —dying of a broken heart upon the curséd tree. As presently we shall see, our dear and blessed Lord is suffering from a thirst which nothing but the love-stream from human hearts can slake.

Let us at once respond to His gracious appeal, and plead for grace to love Him more and ever more :

Soul of my Saviour, sanctify my breast,
Body of Christ, be Thou my saving guest ;
Blood of my Saviour bathe me in Thy tide,
Wash me, ye waters, gushing from His side.
Strength and protection may His passion be,
O dearest Jesus, hear and answer me.
Within Thy wounds, Lord, hide and shelter me,
That I may never, never part from Thee.
Guard and defend me from the foe malign,
In death's drear moment make me wholly Thine.
Call me and bid me come to Thee on high,
That I may praise Thee with Thy Saints for aye.

SCENE VII

JESUS DYING ON THE CROSS

JESUS DYING ON THE CROSS

First Word

"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.—St Luke xxiii, 34.

It is mid-day, with a fierce Syrian sun beating down upon Golgotha, where all the city is met to witness the closing scene of the awful drama in which so many citizens have played a part.

See, what a strangely mixed throng it is! Priests and Levites, Pharisees and Scribes, Sadducees and Herodians, servants and soldiers, young men and women, and children innumerable, all come forth to see the end, the crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ.

Picture for one moment the wild mad Eastern mob, tossing to and fro, screaming and gesticulating in their flowing garments of every shade—a very mosaic of colour dazzling in the sunlight.

They are, most of them at any rate,

discussing the situation, and congratulating one another on the verdict which rids their nation of another arch impostor. What gratitude do they owe to the priests of the Temple for protecting their interests, and for insisting on bringing the would-be Prophet and Miracle-Worker to trial; and to Pilate the Governor for passing the sentence of death!

Some there are, especially among the young mothers, who venture to take the part of Jesus. One cherishes the memory of a little wasted form being restored by Him to health; another with the clamour of execration sounding in her ears cannot forget His words of divine tenderness: "Suffer little children to come unto Me." But no word of praise is suffered by the priests, who remind them that during the four trials not one solitary witness was found to come forward to say a single good word for the Culprit, and that so desperate was the case that even the most immediate and intimate friends of the condemned Prisoner have at last come to see through Him and have forsaken Him to a man.

Thus is fulfilled the word: "I looked for one to grieve together with Me and I

found none, and for one to comfort Me and there was none."

"*Unicus sum.*" "I am alone."

Meanwhile a little higher up the gentle slope a patch of ground is ringed off by the centurion to facilitate the work of the executioners.

Behold these rude rough Romans, see with what soldierly method and precision they do their murderous work! With curses and oaths they fling down the Cross and having prepared its tortures for the "*Victima Amoris*," they seize hold of Jesus, from Whom, helpless from loss of blood and vitality, they begin to tear off all His garments. Jesus Christ is stript now of everything—stript of His friends, stript of His strength, stript of His clothes —nay, stript almost of His skin and of His flesh—"as it were a leper," "one struck by God," "a worm and no man." In this humiliating and shameful condition our blessed Saviour is tossed off His feet and dragged along the Cross while the people cheer and jeer, mock and deride Him.

No strain of comfort or sympathy softens the cruel chorus of mockery. Priests with the soldiers add excruciating accompaniments to it, and it has

been gaining volume with every step along the Via Dolorosa.

Even when the Sacrifice is about to be accomplished there is no pitying silence, nor any token of the common compassion of humanity.

I will not harrow your feelings by describing to you the next stage in the bloody business. Draw a veil over it. Why do not the angels leap from their thrones and drive off the cruel murderers who spring upon the Sacred Body of Christ stretching it along the Cross, with savage glee placing the cruel nails over His blessed hands and feet, while with uplifted hammer they drive them home through the quivering flesh, fastening the dear sacred limbs to the "curséd tree!"

"They have dug My hands and My feet, they have numbered all My bones."

The angels bend in adoration. "He is offered, because He Himself willed it."

It is while the nails are ploughing the sacred hands and feet, while the cross is being clumsily reared and dropped, leaping into the trench prepared for it, and while the surging mob is shouting, hooting and yelling that our dear, agonising Saviour utters the first word since His warning to the daughters of

Jerusalem to weep not over Him, but to weep for themselves and for their children. Draw nearer to Him, look up into His wan and blood-stained face, and drink in with eagerness the word that He struggles to utter. It is a prayer; it is addressed to our Father in Heaven. He Who first of all taught us to look upon the Almighty and Everlasting God as *a* Father, as *the* Father, as *our* own Father, "Whose property it is always to have mercy and to spare"; He Who taught us the "Our Father," is now addressing Himself as our Representative, as our Mediator, as our Brother, as our Vicarious Victim of Love to our Father. Oh! tell me what is the prayer that He utters, what is the petition that He makes in the hour of His distress? "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." What a pathetic, humane, sublime, nay, divine prayer! What a self-forgetting, what a self-giving, self-sacrificing thing is love! and what a revelation of it is this prayer!

Long before He utters it, Jesus, our loving Saviour has forgiven the poor sinners and has taken upon Himself the sinner's sins, has become sin, as the Apostle puts it, and having offered a

broken-hearted contrition for sin, He now turns to His Father, to our Father, to the sinner's Father, and piteously pleads with Him for mercy upon the sinner, and for his restoration to grace and love. May I say that the ruling passion in Jesus is love of sinners? Did He not Himself say: "I am not come to call the just but sinners?" Was He not known as the sinners' Friend? Did He not die for us while we were as yet sinners? Yes, "Jesus Christ came to save sinners." It is His mission. Now, while they are actually nailing Him to the Cross, and thirsting for His blood, His whole Heart goes out in intercession for them.

Oh! how strong, stronger than death itself, is this unutterable love of the Saviour for the sinner! Long before He took flesh and tarried on earth, God had said by the mouth of the prophet: "My people have done two evils; they have forsaken Me the Fountain of Living Waters, and have dug for themselves cisterns that can hold no water." What a wealth and depth of compassion there is in this pathetic utterance! It is not our Lord Who forsakes the sinner, leaving the soul parched with thirst in a barren and dry land; it is the sinner who

forsakes our Lord, while He goes forth after him, like a stream from a gushing fountain to cleanse him of sin to refresh him with grace. There is no limit to

> "that Great Love Divine
> Whose Arms to clasp us on the Cross were spread."

Listen to the word of our dear Lord when He gazed, weeping the while, upon the city that knew not the day of its visitation. He wept, not because of the thought of all the tortures of body, agony of heart, and anguish of spirit that were soon to shake the very foundations of His being in that city, but by reason of the foreknowledge of the doom awaiting the sinners whom He longed to gather to His Heart even as a hen doth gather her chickens about her, but they would not.

And now from the Cross our Lord is making His last supreme appeal for them. "Father, forgive them; be a Father, put forth Thy protecting arms and draw them from the ways of iniquity, from the precipice of woe, from the bottomless pit. Extend for My sake a royal pardon, send forth a flight of angels laden with stores of grace that may touch

their poor sin-burdened hearts; drive them not for ever from Thy sight, compel them to come back from the ways of sin and misery into the paths of grace and peace. I die for them."

So He pleaded, as if it were a light thing to forgive, and yet what a miracle of love there is in this royal pardon. When we transgress the physical laws of nature we must take the inevitable consequences, and when we set at defiance the social or the national laws we must pay the penalty. How comes it then that we can expect forgiveness, hope for it, be sure of it, if only we repent of having broken the moral laws? Listen: "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Just. He is the Propitiation for our sins, and not for our sins only, but for the sins of the whole world." For Christ's sake we are forgiven. But let us consider the divine ingenuity, which urges in extenuation of our guilt the plea of ignorance, "forgive them, for they know not what they do."

The world calls sin a mistake, a stage in evolution, a token of growth, a law of life, a thing no more to be sanely regretted than the non-attainment of some

ideal standard of physical stature or natural beauty.

Surely Society that can reason thus, while its atmosphere is being poisoned by the baneful influence of sin, knows not what it says, knows not what it does. What a rebuke to it, with all its vaunted wisdom and progress, is this estimate of it by Jesus Christ. We are living in an age which worships intellect. We love clever people, clever books, clever talk. The great sin before Smart Society is to be stupid, to be dull. We want to be amused and entertained by clever men and clever women, clever books, clever plays. Our dear Lord from His lofty death-bed surveys the social world. He sees its sinful ways, its sinful doings, and He declares it to be an ignorant and foolishly silly world—a world that has not as yet learned its first lesson—a world that sins, a world that crucifies its God, that closes Heaven against itself and opens Hell, and yet knows not what it is doing. It is indeed a world that "multiplieth words without knowledge." It may have discovered the key to some of the secrets of nature, but what it needs is the golden key to the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ.

The longer the Christian man lives the more mysterious become to him both the hidden things in the kingdom of nature, and in the realms of grace. What a poor, puny, paltry breed is man; most ignorant of what he is most assured. Well may the poet compare him to—

> "An infant crying in the night:
> An infant crying for the light
> And with no language but a cry."

What ignorant children we all are! What have we really learned, in spite of the gigantic strides that have been made in the fields of knowledge once closed to us? What do our men of light and leading know about life, about death, about the union of soul and body; about light, electricity, or even about the ultimate component parts of matter? Nothing at all. We label all these things with learned names, but they are little more to the educated, than fossils catalogued in our museums are to the unlettered.

However there is one thing we all know now—better to-day than last Good Friday—and it is this, that there is something in the world greater, better than all knowledge, and it is love. Look up, and on the Cross see what real love

really is. It is the greatest thing in Heaven, the grandest thing on earth. Let this be our knowledge and this our love, to know and to love "Christ, and Him crucified." Come, come and say to Him:

"We come to Thee Sweet Jesus,
Thou wilt not ask us why;
We cannot live without Thee,
Still less without Thee die."

Second Word

"This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise."
—St Luke, xxiii, 43.

Judged by this world's standard our Lord's life upon earth was a splendid failure, because it ended in shame and ignominy on the curséd tree. Barely three years before the world when He was hunted down by His fellow countrymen, seized by them, then rushed through four mock trials and condemned to die a felon's death. And what is even more strangely extraordinary still, there was no one to raise a voice, to utter a word in His defence. Where was Zacchæus, where Nicodemus, Lazarus and the countless others who were pledged to Him by the vows of friendship? What had become of those lepers made whole, of the sick made well, of the dead brought to life? Why did not they rally round Him and speak in His behalf? And why not they too who had been fed and taught

in their thousands through His gracious bounty? At any rate, why did not some at least among His most intimate followers and friends, say, Peter, James or John, leap forward to bear witness to the integrity and sinlessness of His character?

Observe well, the trial of Jesus is the only trial on record in which a prisoner has been condemned to death without a word being set up in His defence, and it is the only state trial on record in which miscarriage of justice regulated every detail in its varied proceedings from its opening scene in the house of Annas, to its close with Pilate washing his hands. It was indeed to be expected that the two trials before Annas and Caiaphas would be conducted on the lines they were, but in the hands of Pilate, the representative of Roman Law and Roman Justice, there was at least the presumption that the outward forms of procedure in a criminal case would be observed. But no, our Lord was to be an exception to every rule. "Jesus of Nazareth" a modern writer has truly said, "was not condemned, but He was slain. His martyrdom was not miscarriage of justice, it was murder." Yes, and Pilate knew it, and so "taking water he washed his

hands before the people saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just Man," and then, having scourged Jesus, he delivered Him unto them to be crucified.

As we pause to meditate on our Lord's trial, how ashamed ought we to feel of resenting so bitterly the treatment of friends in whom we put all our trust, who seemed ready to die for us and have yet, perhaps, condemned us on hearsay without giving us an opportunity of self-defence. How can we harbour for one instant any unforgiving or resentful thought when there rings out to-day a bugle call bidding us rally round our Chief, beset on every side by cruel foes, and deserted in His most dire extremity by all whom He loved and trusted.

And now let me proceed to remind you of what is more strangely wonderful in our Lord's trial even than the lack of any defence, and it is this: the lack o any conversion.

In the menology of the Saints, in narratives dealing with their martyrdoms, we are consoled by the numberless souls whom their constancy, patience and heroism have won to God; but our dear and blessed Lord is an exception in this too.

Follow Him from the hour of His arrest

to the hour of His condemnation, and can you give me the name of one convert won, of one friend made? "I have trodden the wine-press alone and there is not a man with Me." "I looked about and there was none to help," "I sought and there was none to give aid." "They laughed Him to scorn."

You will tell me this is indeed so, but when He shall be lifted up, yes, now that He is preaching and praying from the pulpit of the Cross He must needs find a way into every heart made of penetrable stuff. Why, His prayer for His murderers will convert the whole hill-side till they sink to their knees in the agonies of contrition. Come, see what it is that really does happen. Our dear and blessed Lord's hallowed and gracious prayer instead of softening does but harden the hearts of the throng pressing round the gallows. His pathetic pleadings serve but to evoke hideous blasphemies. Listen and be satisfied: The chief priests with the scribes and ancients mocking him said: "He saved others; Himself He cannot save." "If He be the King of Israel let Him come down from the Cross and we will believe in Him." And the people and the rulers

with them derided Him saying: "He saved others; let Him save Himself, if He be the Christ, the elect of God!"

Aye, "and the soldiers also mocked Him, coming to Him, and offering Him vinegar and saying: 'If Thou be King of the Jews, save Thyself!'"

Nay, even they that passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads and saying, "Vah! Thou that destroyest the Temple of God and in three days buildest it up again, save Thyself, coming down from the Cross." Nor was this all, for St Mark tells us that "they even who were crucified with Him reviled Him."

Did ever vilest criminal die a murderer's death on the scaffold amid such terrible surroundings? Well may the Victim of Love exclaim by the lips of the prophet: "There is no one with Me."

But, stay, there is a rift in the clouds, there is a note of sweet music amid the crash of blasphemy and rage. Listen, it comes from a quarter least expected. It is Dismas, the poor robber on our Lord's right, who utters the first kind word yet heard since the Last Supper. Something has touched the heart of Dismas, and all the man is broken with remorse, con-

trition and pity. Why, he is actually rebuking his fellow thief. No one unacquainted with the criminal classes can have the faintest idea what courage this implies — it is bravery almost superhuman. What does he say to Gestas? "Neither dost thou fear God, seeing thou art under the same condemnation, and we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this Man hath done no evil." There is, perhaps, no body of men so keenly sensitive about justice as the criminal classes—nothing will they resent so much as injustice. Dismas recognises the gross miscarriage of justice in our Lord's case, and he realises that one who can face and meet it with our Lord's patience, peace and prayer, must be more than a man.

Accordingly he turns his eyes from Gestas to Jesus, and says to Him in the hearing of that multitudinous mob: "Lord, remember me when Thou shalt come into Thy kingdom." It was just the prayer to please our Lord, to melt His Sacred Heart. How He does love us to trust Him: indeed, He would be less than a man if He did not love it. Trust is such a fine expression of love. It is like a golden chain binding heart to

heart. Not to trust, is not to love; while to trust Him is to throw one's whole person on Him. It is to give up one's whole self to Jesus confident that all will be well even when all looks ill, in the present and in the future. Dismas did not misplace his trust. He placed it where alone the mind, heart and will can find repose — in the Heart of Jesus Christ, our Rest. "This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise." Behold here the answer to the repentant thief's petition! To be for ever with our Lord, to be with Him in Paradise, that is Heaven. How little our divine Master has told us about the other side, about the world beyond. He has told us little more than this— that He Himself will be our reward exceeding great; that we shall be for ever with Him.

Clearly this is enough for those that really love Him to know. And if we do love Him as we ought, I do not well see what more we want to know. It is not the loyal friends of Jesus Christ who are inquisitive to learn more, for in His friendship is the essence of all peace and joy here and hereafter:

> "Sole comfort in our banishment,
> Oh! what when face to face?"

But we are living in an age when instead of trusting loyally to Jesus Christ, and patiently waiting for the vision of home to satisfy the cravings of our being for life, and light and love, Society turns from the revelations of our Lord to seek at the hand of the spiritualist, the palmist, the clairvoyant, what it does not behoove it, in this life of probation and trust, to know. And with what result? With the inevitable result that men become restless and superstitious. Peace and patience and Christian trust fly from them. God always leaves the soul that trusts Him in the repose of peace, while the spirit that is not of God imparts the restlessness of fever.

Let us learn from Dismas the lesson of trust, and in the meantime let us like him bear patiently our present troubles of heart and trials of mind—all our sufferings—seeing that "we receive the due reward of our deeds," while we ask as we gaze into the Face of the Crucified: "What evil hath He done?"

Oh, Gestas! Oh, misery past picturing! Only to think of it! Dying nearest of all to the Heart of Love and not to feel the warmth of that furnace! What a hardening process is sin. It acts

on the heart as the sun acts on clay. O Jesus, here cut, here burn, here punish me, but in my death call me and bid me come to Thee. O Dismas: I have been a thief too. I have robbed God of His glory, I have taken His grace and flung it aside, I have fed on His flesh and His blood, and they have not sanctified me. I have sold Him like Judas, denied Him like Peter, scorned Him like Herod, condemned Him like Pilate, yet I am not afraid. For I know His mercy as well as I do my sin. Lord, I will repent the past; Lord, I will use the present; Lord, with Thy grace I will carry my cross after Thee, never looking back. What is this life? What is it?

"Life is a burden, bear it;
Life is a duty, dare it;
Life is a crown of thorns, wear it;
Life is the pledge of love, swear it."

Third Word.

"Woman, behold thy Son: . . . behold thy Mother."—St John, xix, 26, 27.

"Now, there stood by the Cross of Jesus, His Mother." Under what a burden of gratitude has not the beloved disciple placed the Church for these brief, pregnant words! They are the only reference in the history of the Sacred Passion to our dear and blessed Lord's Mother. But for St John we should have had nothing but conjecture to fall back upon for our Lady's place during those last hours in agony on the Cross. Until she met her blessed Son bearing the instrument of His torture to Calvary, where had this afflicted Mother been? Most likely she had sought some desolate shade wherein to pour forth her dear soul in prayer for strength to stand beside His death-bed, strong as a square-built fortress against armed besiegers. What an endless eternity

those hours of waiting seemed to her. What a flood of thoughts swept across her mind as she knelt with bowed head waiting for her cousin John to take her to Golgotha. There was the Annunciation with the prayer: "Thy will be done;" there was the prophecy of Simeon, and the sword transfixing her very soul; then, too, soon followed the loss of Him for three days, and after that those years of peace and sweetness in their home at Nazareth.

Oh, that most dear and lovely Mother, as she knelt absorbed in thought during the awful Thursday night, kept recalling once more to her heart those days of infancy when Jesus fed at her breast; when with His little pink and pearly hands folded He slumbered while she rocked His cradle bed; when she stood Him on her lap and He smothered her with His baby kisses; when with the growth of years He gladly ran her errands, drew water for her from the well, brought her home wild strawberries and honey, and great nosegays of flowers plucked from the mountain side.

Perhaps her mind reverted to the time when she had occasionally ventured to

draw from His Heart more details of His Sacred Passion, and He, unable to bear her tears, would pass it by to speak of Heaven when tears should flow no more.

> " O quam tristis et afflicta
> Fuit illa benedicta
> Mater Unigeniti ! "

Then, as she "kept all these words pondering them in her heart," some one or other of the disciples would break in upon her tears to tell her the last tidings about the cruel trial of her Son. She heard how splendidly loyal He had been to His followers when questioned about them by Annas; how patient and gentle when struck across the face by a brutal servant; with what divine dignity He had borne Himself when false charges were brought against Him by perjured witnesses; how He had brought home to Caiaphas the judgment that awaited him, and how Herod had been treated with silence, in spite of his "questions in many words," because he was an unclean worldling and a murderer. She heard of the gross miscarriage of justice in all four courts; of Pilate declaring Him blameless and yet scourg-

ing Him, and finally how that same Pilate pronounced the verdict of death upon Him, while calling for water and protesting himself innocent of the blood of the Innocent One.

> " Quis est homo, qui non fleret,
> Matrem Christi si videret
> In tanto supplicio."

And now the beloved disciple, all broken with trouble and distress, comes to her with the agonizing news that her only-begotten Son and Saviour is actually on His way to Calvary: on His way to die. Leaning upon the arm of her virgin cousin and followed soon by her sister Mary of Cleophas, and Mary the Magdalen, our blessed Lady goes forth with the ejaculation on her lips: "Be it done unto me according to Thy word;" nor does she stay till the yells and shouts of the maddened mob proclaim to her broken heart: "He is coming; He is coming; my Saviour and my Son."

Who can pretend to describe that interview, the like of which, thank God, never again shall be seen on earth! That meeting between Mother and Son is too pathetically sad, too unutterably

sacred for us to intrude upon. We will bow our heads in adoration and follow the Cross in spirit till we stand by the Mother's side beneath it, remaining to the end.

The blessed Mother has heard His first prayer, "so like Him," she says to herself, to offer it for afflicted sinners; she has caught the promise made to the repentant thief dying so near to her; but as yet that most blessed and beloved Son has uttered no word, has sent no burning message of love into her heart, all melting with tenderness. Observe, there is no promise of immediate Paradise for her who of all on earth most of all deserves to be the first to pass into the beatific joys of Heaven! What a lesson is this! What an essential lesson for those who are studying sanctity in the school of suffering! Look up at this valiant woman once more; see her with her upturned countenance, her gaze fixed upon the mangled body of her blessed Jesus. She heaves no sigh, she utters no word, she sheds no tear. Her sorrow has passed into an agony of grief; she stands erect, transfixed to the Cross by the sword of which holy Simeon had spoken to her.

See, her dear and blessed Son is bending His eyes towards her; He speaks, "Woman, Woman ever-blessed; Woman blessed among all women; Woman bravest of the brave, dearest of the dear, kindest of the kind, purest of the pure, and holiest of the holy—Woman! behold thy Son." Then addressing the beloved John, He adds: "Son! behold thy Mother."

Never shall we know what was the soul communication between Mother and Son accompanying this message from the Cross. The word is full of mystery; almost sacramental, all but creative.

"Behold in John the whole human race. Become a Mother to humanity; bring forth afresh the redeemed race in the throes of motherhood at the foot of the Cross; be to all My redeemed ones what you have been to Me, what you will ever be to Me—the best of Mothers."

Stretching forth her whole soul, putting her supreme will-strength to accept this mission to which she is deputed, with which she is charged, this sweetest but strongest of women takes into her bosom the race redeemed, and folds them to her maternal heart.

Let the repentant thief breathe forth

his last sigh in peace and so enter into eternal bliss; let the holy souls in Limbo swell the triumphant procession heavenwards, while she who feels she could fall down dead under the Cross, will hold up, will live on a life of prolonged agony, doing for the Infant Church what she had done with ecstatic delight for her Jesus, her Saviour and her Son.

She will remain behind, no matter, cost her what it may, loyal to her mission as nursing Mother to the mystical body of Jesus, till she shall be called hence to the everlasting embrace of her only Son in her only Home—Heaven.

> "O Paradise, O Paradise.
> 'Tis weary waiting here,
> I long to be where Jesus is,
> To see and hold Him near."

Oh, the mystery of God's will! What a discipline, what a school, what an education it is! When I look around me, when I look into the varied expressions of unutterable woe, seen on the faces of many near and dear to me, and on the countenances of so many thousands of others, I cannot help exclaiming to myself; "What is all suffering and sorrow, agony and anguish put together, compared with the sea of

grief, of bitter grief in which the Mother of my Saviour is plunged at the foot of the Cross!" Well may our dear and blessed Lord remind us all, but especially those who are overwhelmed with sorrow, to behold their Mother. Behold her, dive down if you can into the depths of her sorrow, and tell me what is the measure of it. We shall never be able to sound the depth of her grief, because we can never hope to gauge the height of her love.

Like John, take her tenderly, lovingly, devoutly to your home, to your own heart. Make much of her; ask her to be a Mother to you, to help you to be true to your mission in life, no matter how disappointing it may be; ask her to teach you to do the Holy Will, and to bear it, to follow the Crucified, to stand up bravely *in all trials* under the Cross on Calvary; ask her to make you love her daily more and more. How wonderful, how beautiful, how precious she is! Each one of us tries to love her most.

"How do I love Thee, O my Mother blest?
I love Thee with a love no words of men
Nor passionate strain of melody can touch;
With all that in my own poor self is best,
With all I give my dearest one, and then
Ten thousand times ten thousand times as much."

Fourth Word.

"My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"—St Mark xv, 34.

A strangely weird gloom is gathering around and over Calvary; birds of ill omen are sweeping across the sky, while swarms of flies obscure the view like banks of thick cloud torn from the angry heavens. It is a preternatural darkness, which, coming one knows not whence, settles like a pall over the scene of the Crucifixion. "Behold," said the prophet, "darkness shall cover the earth, and a mist the people." "And it was almost the sixth hour, and there was darkness," says St Luke, "over all the earth until the ninth hour. And the sun was darkened." What can be the meaning of this worse than Egyptian darkness, "of this day of clouds and of thick darkness?" of this hour of blackness and gloominess? "This is your hour and the power of darkness," saith the Lord.

It is the evil one's supreme and final struggle to thwart or arrest the triumph of the Cross. "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light," they have looked into the face of Him Who "enlighteneth every man coming into the world."

Satan, the prince of this world, is being driven back to hell, "the place of eternal misery, confusion, horror, and of outer darkness," and his dark wings with those of his dark legions, as they sweep across the sky, obscure the face of the noon-day sun, forming an impenetrable cloud in the eye of earth and heaven.

The motley throng on the slopes of Calvary break up into little groups, all huddled together and speechless with fear. It is during this felt silence, while men are trembling, fearful to move lest the earth should open its jaws and hell devour them, that the fourth word is spoken from the Cross. Oh! what a ringing and piteous cry it is! Almost like a wail of despair, as though some broken-hearted hero, before falling back in death, were yielding up his soul in an agony of pain.

"My God, my God, why hast Thou

forsaken Me?" Forsaken Me! "Forsaken." There is no word in human language so pregnant of blank despair as this.

"Forsaken," it means so terribly much, while it implies so much more.

"Forsaken," you think of the derelict and shattered bark, with torn sails, adrift on the open sea, or of the haunted house on lonely moor where the rain wrestles with the wind.

"Forsaken." Is it an infant left on the Thames embankment; or a child abandoned in a garret by its drunken mother; or is it a poor girl cast by crime and want upon the streets; or else, is it some criminal shadowed by the police, a recruit to swell the ranks of the foes of Society?

"Forsaken." Perhaps some among us gathered here around the Cross can say that we ourselves have tasted of this most bitter chalice, and have felt what it is to be forsaken by fortune, or by health, or by wife, or husband, child, or friend. Then perhaps we have wandered lonely as a cloud, imagining there never was a case to mate our own in sadness.

To be forsaken by friends who are all in all to you, to whom you have opened

your soul, to whom you have perhaps committed what no one else but God ever knew, to whom you have been as a child in clinging trust, from whom you sought advice, and whose every possible, as well as actual, wish you have made it a life-long privilege and duty to fulfil. Ah! no one can pretend to understand what I mean, who has not felt these agonies in his own soul!

Look up, once more; open your eyes to see; open your mind to understand; open your heart to feel—realise, if you can, something of the situation before you. Who is this hanging on the accursed tree? What is this that Jesus is suffering? Oh, why is it that He must needs be thus tried and proved? Is it from His own Sacred Lips we hear this most piteous appeal? "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" "*Quis credidit?*" Can we believe our ears? O blessed Mother, what can this mean?

Yes, ask her, if you will, what depth of mystery, what gold-mine of wonderful love lies in the midst of this saddest of all sad words. And what does the Mater Dolorosa tell us? Why, she bids us remember that her adorable Son is

being offered, because He Himself has willed it; that He is there nailed by His Hands and Feet to the tree because He Himself has chosen it—for His death-bed.

He is suffering for our sake—"*propter nos homines*," He is bearing our infirmities, He is carrying our griefs; He is as it were a leper and one struck by God; He is wounded for our iniquities, He is bruised for our sins. "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Behold here, in this sacred text of Isaias, we have the only explanation of this awful drama, the one and only true interpretation of this wail of woe! It is sin which is wringing from our tortured Lord and Saviour this cry of the forsaken.

Jesus has undertaken to atone for, to repair each and every sin, and He invites sin to come and fasten its penalties on Him, to wreak its chastisements on His flesh, and to break through into His Sacred Heart, and cause it to utter the expression of its loneliness without God.

It is because our expiring Saviour is the Victim on the Cross, the Victim of love, if you will, but the Victim, too, of sin that He permits this sense of aliena-

tion from God, this feeling of being thrust aside and forsaken by God to take possession of Him. "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

Dark, murky sin-clouds seem to rise up from the four quarters of the earth, and as they roll over Calvary they burst and discharge their load of revolting horrors over the Crucified. Jesus feels the benumbing touch of sin, the blighting effects of its presence, the pressure of its dead weight upon His pure soul. It is more than He can bear. It well nigh crushes Him, it seems to drag Him down into the bottomless pit—the clouds envelop Him, the miasma of Hell is about Him; Heaven is receding, Calvary is fading away; is He Himself—is He the penitent or is He the sinner? As He lifts His sacred Eyes and nothing sees for the thick darkness, He permits Himself to utter this cry, to express this awful feeling of being forsaken by God.

Let us thank our dear and blessed Lord for this fourth word from the pulpit of the Cross. What a sermon it is, what a vital lesson it drives home to our hearts! This agonizing cry from the Crucified is our Lord's assurance to

us that we are never, and can never be forsaken by God. No matter how far we may have wandered from our Father, no matter how riotously we have lived, no matter to what lengths we may have gone, or to what depth of misery and degradation we ourselves may have fallen or have even dragged others, yet even then, when our country may have cast us off, and our kith and kin forsaken us, our Father in Heaven will follow us, pity us, and if we will seek His face will forgive us; forsake us never.

Ask the woman of Samaria, who was living in sin; ask Mary the Magdalen, who had sounded the depths of sin; ask the unfortunate one taken in the midst of her sin. Ask Peter who denied, and the rest who forsook Him, their loving Saviour Jesus Christ; ask them, and they will tell you our dear Lord does not wait to hear the act of sorrow; He, like His Eternal Father, goes to meet the sinner to give reconciliation, pardon, union.

There is no limit to His mercy. Listen—

"Kind hearts are here, yet would the tenderest one
Have limits to its mercy; God has none

Yes, man's forgiveness may be true and sweet
But yet he stoops to give it. More complete
Is love than lays forgiveness at thy feet,
And pleads with thee to raise it. Only Heaven
Means crowned, not vanquished, when it says—
'Forgiven.'"

The lesson to be learned from this fourth word is "Trust." Is there any soul present here who feels it is no use trying? Is there perhaps another who is saying in his heart: "I have tried so often, but it is always the same relapse — I cannot break the chains forged by years of habitual sin?" And there may be others also who fancy no one cares for them, that God has long ceased to hear *their* prayers:

"Kind hearts are here, yet would the tenderest one
Have limits to its mercy; *God has none.*"

God's mercy is limitless, as His sway is boundless, and His power fathomless. Trust Him; He appreciates nothing more than trust. Say with David: "though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me." With Job: "Although He should slay me, I will trust in Him;" and with Jeremias:

"The Lord is with me as a strong warrior, He is my Portion and my Salvation."

Arise, and let us say to Him, as He gazes down upon us so pathetically from the Cross :—

"O Jesus, my name is Pride, Covetousness, Lust, Anger, Gluttony, Envy, Sloth. I am called Might-have been, Forsaken, Misery, Despair, but though I walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou—my Dying Saviour—art with me."

"Cast sin aside, lean on thy Guide,
His boundless mercy will provide;
Trust, and thy trusting soul shall prove,
Christ is thy life, and Christ thy love."

Fifth Word

"I thirst."—St John xix, 28.

Of all mysteries the most mysterious is the mystery of divine Love. At one time we fancy we know so much about it, while at another we discover we know so little; sometimes we flatter ourselves we are beginning to sound its depths, but too soon we find there is no plummet to measure it; or else we fondly hope we are gaining upon it and may presently reach its highest point, when suddenly we see a vast range of hills before us hiding its beauty still further from our sight.

Till we pass from this arid, pathless, desert land to slake our soul's thirst at the fountain-head of divine Love we must be content just to taste, and by tasting see that the Lord is sweet.

Love's Home is Heaven; outside of Heaven, Love is in disguise, as a Babe laid in a crib at Bethlehem, or as a felon hanging crucified on Calvary; or else

Love is hidden behind the veils of wheaten bread in the tabernacle.

Yes, here outside the City of perfect beauty, here in a land sin-stained and care-burdened, Love is bathed in tears, scourged at a pillar, crowned with thorns, nailed to a Cross. For a moment look at some of the effects of Love.

In the divine Infant folded in sleep upon its Mother's bosom, I see Love emptying Himself of Himself that He may give Himself to me. And here on the Cross I see Love sacrificing Himself and offering Himself that He Himself may die instead of me; while if I turn to the tabernacle on the altar, I find Love annihilating Himself and turned to the semblance of bread that He Himself may nourish me. Oh, the height and the depth, the length and the breadth of divine Love! If Thou art so ravishingly attractive seen as a Babe, as a Slave, as Sin, as Bread:

"Oh! what when face to face!"

To whom then are we indebted for our more intimate knowledge of divine Love? To Jesus Christ.

Until He came and translated divine Love into human symbols, and expressed divine Love in human language, and

divine service in human sacrifice, what did man know of Love, of God? For God is Love.

It is when I look up at the crucifix, that I begin to realise "*Amor meus crucifixus*," that I learn my first very real lesson in Love. "*Respice in faciem Christi tui*." Look into the face of Jesus Christ, peruse His wounds, number His bones, listen to His deep sighs, hear His words of love. What is this great sight? This is Love, self-giving, expressed in terms of self-sacrifice. Pause for a moment, and hear Him: "Greater love than this no man hath that he lay down his life for his friend."

But I am the friend; He loves me and giveth Himself for me. Is it not true what I said a moment ago; Love is of all mysteries the great mystery?

O my Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ: "*Quid est homo*"—what can you find to love in man so intensely, so ardently, so enthusiastically, so extravagantly that, not content to agonize for him, you must needs call out to him in the supreme moment of excruciating pain—"*Sitio*," "I thirst."

Yes, there on the cross, our Lord is tortured by a raging thirst which nothing

can slake while there is a human soul to save. His dear, precious, mangled Body drained of Its blood, all on fire with pain, is in an agony for water. "My Body is athirst. I thirst as never did shipwrecked mariner, or galley slave, or martyr flung into flames. I thirst more than Dives crying out for one drop of water to cool his burning tongue. I thirst for water, but this thirst in My Body is nothing compared with My soul thirst. '*Da mihi animas*:' bring me, give me souls, and I will gladly bleed and die for them."

"*Quae utilitas in sanguine meo?* Why shed My Blood, to what purpose this waste, why toss aside My Life, if the sacrifice will not woo and win for My poor, broken Heart the souls of men."

What is divine Love translated into human? What is divine self-giving, expressed in terms of human self-sacrifice? It is a thirst for souls.

Is there in this congregation some sorrow-stricken soul asking: "And why does He care for me?" Before answering that let me put a question: And pray, why do children so love the things they make, that they will sit down and cry inconsolable when they are snatched or

stolen away; or, why did the artist so highly prize the marble sculptured by his hand that he stood wondering why it did not speak; or, tell me why will the hen fight for her brood, and rest not till she hath gathered them in shelter under her wings; or lastly, why will a mother hang over the bed of her child fading, drooping, dying, plucked too soon from her breast, in an agony of woe because she may not take its place and die that it may live?

There is but one explanation of these revelations of natural love: all these phases, tokens of love, are shadowings forth, beggarly outline drawings of God's love of souls, created by Him out of nothing, formed and fashioned to His own image and likeness, and made to partake of the duration of His Eternal life, to enjoy the raptures of His bliss, the wealth of His love, the strength of His being, its sweetness, kindness, loveliness, goodness, for evermore.

God created man for Eternal love: and love—not knowledge, not morality, not faith, not hope—is man's everlasting destiny. Yes, union with God, which is nothing else but love of God, in the face-to-face possession of Him, is the grand end for which we have been created.

It is because our blessed Lord saw this destiny wrecked, this end lost, and lost for ever; lost by man's own fault, lost for so poor, paltry, petty a trifle—a bauble—that He leapt from His Great White Throne into the little dark chamber of Mary's bosom, there took flesh, became man, and travelled from Bethlehem to Calvary, from the crib to the cross, on which we now see Him dying more of a broken heart than from physical suffering, struggling with parched tongue and fevered lips to say; "*Sitio*," "I thirst."

Does anyone here present know what it is to thirst for a friend torn away from his life, robbed from his heart all bleeding with pain, gone, and gone for ever? It is a foretaste of hell.

Or is there here a sad widowed mother whose only child, on whom she lavished all her heart's blood, has been enticed away from her, and gone, a prodigal, into a far country, wasting his substance living riotously? Oh the agony and raging thirst to see her son and once again to fold him in her arms!

But what are these but weak examples of devouring thirst when set beside the thirst of Christ our Lord for souls. He and He only knows what thirst awaits

the sinner in the fiery pools of hell. He Himself is bleeding, dying to save such a one from the consequences of his mad folly. "Come, come to Me, come repent, and slake My thirst."

> "My life is like a broken bowl,
> A broken bowl that cannot hold
> One drop of water for Thy love
> Or cordial in the searching cold:
> Cast in the fire the perished thing:
> Melt and re-mould it till it be
> A royal cup for Him, my King
> O Jesus, drink of me."

Come to Him not with the sour vinegar of distrust and fear, but with the sweet wine of love and trust.

"If thou didst know the gift of God, and Who He is that saith to thee: 'Give Me to drink,' thou perhaps wouldst have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water. He that shall drink of the water that I will give him shall not thirst for ever." Oh, that you members of Society, who vainly attempt to slake your thirst at cisterns that can hold no water, would give heed to this.

Remember that our dear and blessed Lord knows us, and knows our wants, and thus He knows that there is one fountain, and one only at which we can quench our heart's thirst. He sees you,

Society men and women, drinking of every fountain, and trying the waters of every tainted stream ; but He knows you might as well try to appease your thirst with the waters of the wide, deep sea. "My people," He cries out by the mouth of His prophet: "have done two great evils ; they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and have dug for themselves cisterns that can hold no water."

There is nothing that can quench man's thirst but love, and let me repeat it there is no love outside the Heart of Jesus that will slake it. I ask you who have tried to satisfy your cravings with creatures, have you found rest, refreshment? "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again :" and, perhaps it will be in hell, and then the thirst will be for God! But it will be too late—too late! Oh take heed, and listen to this sad story—

"Then died away
That voice, in silence as of sorrow:
Then footsteps echoing like a sigh
Pass us by,
Lingering footsteps, slow to pass.
On the morrow
I saw the grass,
Each footprint marked in blood, and on the door
The mark of blood for evermore."

Sixth Word

"It is finished."—St John xix, 30.

To the chosen three, to the Magdalen, to John and to the Blessed Mother what an agony was that noon-day darkness that hid away from their eyes the face of their beloved Jesus! The moments lengthened into hours, till they felt that a life-time had been lived during the distressing impenetrable darkness.

Do you not fancy you can hear "the woman that had been a sinner," as she turns beseechingly first to John and then to our dear Lady, asking; "Will this mid-day night ever lift; will this torture ever come to an end?"

Presently the black pall is torn by the winds, and the silver lining of the sable clouds as they roll past tells that the sun still is shining, and that the hour of the power of darkness is fast passing away. With the dispersing of the clouds the divine Love-Victim once more up-

lifts His dear Head, exclaiming as He turns His eyes to Heaven: "It is finished."

O dear Lord, what is finished? He seems to say: "A very history is finished. First of all the cruel work of sin is finished. Look upon Me and you will see even in the ravages sin has wrought on My Body how finished is its work of destruction. Ask those who tell you sin is but "an impropriety" or "a want of taste," nay, "a token of life and growth," to gaze upon its handiwork graven on My mangled, torn and bleeding frame stretched on this Cross, to which sin has so closely nailed it. Ask the pleasure-seeker, the scoffer, and the gambler to come from their well-lit lounges of vice and count up, if they can, the number of lashes and gashes their lives have inflicted upon My Body hanging on this tree. Bid the woman of fashion, equipped in gowns for which she will not pay, to look for a moment on Me covered with blood, and dust, and spittle; tell the realist, who prides himself on describing fleshly horrors as they truly are, to depict the hideousness of sin which has made of Me 'the most beautiful among the sons of men' 'as it were a leper,' 'in whom there is no beauty and

no comeliness.' Invite all those votaries of pleasure in Society who drink down iniquity like water, who fill themselves with costly wine, who crown themselves with roses, who riot in every meadow, whose strength is their law of justice, and who say there is no sin except being dull, and no remorse except being found out, to come forth from their whited sepulchres, their lairs of uncleanness and dens of iniquity, and stand, forcing themselves to gaze upon My Body mangled through their deeds of shame."

Let them behold in Calvary sin's finished picture, its framed masterpiece. "Is it nothing to you? Look upon Me—open your eyes and see, open your ears and hear—read the inscription: '*Consummatum est.*' Your life of indulgence in sin has triumphed. With your soft and delicate hand you have stabbed Me in the Heart, and I am dying. Sin has triumphed! Which of you who boasts of your social distinctions dare stand under the Cross and ask, 'Is it I, Lord?'"

"If any man say he has not sinned, he deceiveth himself," says the Apostle, "and the truth is not in him." In the measure in which you have sinned, in that measure

you have taken part in the Passion and Death of Jesus Christ. For once in your lives, to-day at least, force yourselves to read in the scene before you not a desultory historical fact, not even the story only of one put to death through the envy of the Jews, and in consequence of the weakness of a time-serving Roman Governor, but in the sight before your eyes, see what you Society people have done. Bring home to your own hearts what "having a good time;" what "being natural and happy;" what "yielding to Nature;" "the sanctity of sense" really means.

It means taking up a whip and with it lacerating the body of Jesus Christ, it means seizing hold of iron nails and driving them into the Hands and Feet of Him Who wants us to be brave and pure, it means fastening a thorny crown upon that Head which is the seat of wisdom, and thrusting an iron spear into that Heart which is the throne of Love. "*Consummatum est.*" "It is finished." Behold your own handiwork; it is written with blood on the flesh itself of Him who is actually hanging on the tree before us. How say: "there is no possible wrong in pleasing each other as we like best!"

Besides reading in the word "It is finished" the history of a single wilful deliberate mortal sin, I read also another story: it is a love story, the great, the greatest love story. It is entitled, "He loved them to the end." Just as sin is the only real evil, so love is the only real good. In fact love is everything, nothing else matters.

There is absolutely no substitute for love, for "all gold in comparison of her is as a little sand, and silver in respect of her shall be counted as clay," better than health and beauty, her light cannot be put out. "She is an infinite treasure to man." To die without love is to be lost, to die with love is to be saved.

Love, then, is man's perfect beauty, love is man's final destiny. I repeat then what I have already said; nothing else really matters. To teach us this first lesson in the spiritual life, to help us to realise what it means, our divine Lord willingly submitted to all the indignities, the injuries, the insults, the torments of body and the tortures of soul involved in His Sacred Passion and Death. Nothing short of the scenes of Holy Week was calculated to bring right

home to frivolous Society the true nature of Love.

Our Lord knew that (had He not suffered for man) wayward man, always on the look out for excuses, would have argued that it was true, indeed, God had shown a sort of love in creating him, had proved still more His love by coming on earth and living for him; but what of that? Where had been the self-giving which was ready to express itself in self-sacrifice? Our dear and blessed Lord would not give to man the opportunity of thus belittling His great love. So, "having loved His own," says the Apostle, "He loved them to the end."

The love of the Saviour for the sinner is a perfect love. It is a finished love. Can you not imagine that you actually hear Him as He reads the story of the sins of Society exclaiming from the Cross, "Greater love than this no man hath." The Cross is the measure of love—the measure of our Lord's love for us. "He loved me, and gave Himself for me," is the exclamation that must spring from the heart of each of you with the same intensity as it leapt from the soul of the Apostle St Paul.

You then are something more than so

many political votes, so much social influence, so many shares in a company, so much gold in the bank. Whatever you may be in Society, before Jesus Christ you are so much love. If you have none for Him, you are nothing; and when you shall knock at the Golden Gate, to your cry, "Let me in," you shall hear the answer, "I know you not."

Here calculate, if you can, the price paid, reckon the cost, tell me in terms of toil and sweat, of jeers and blows, of insults and injuries, in loss of friends, of reputation, of blood and of life, what Jesus has laid down that He may win and take up your love which foolishly you lavish "on loveliness which every moment dies." Surely, "you are bought at a great price"—verily, your love is no longer your own!

If anyone has a right to the first place in your heart it is Jesus Christ. "Come to me," is still His cry, "Love Me," "Give Me thy heart," "Abide in My love." Yes, I hear someone saying: "Ah, that I could be sure of myself, if only I could not merely *be* in His dear love, but *abide*, and abide in it for *ever*."

You may become morally sure of the

accomplishment of your wish, if only, like His friends loyal and true, you take the means. "*Consummatum est.*" "It is finished." Our Lord's mission is accomplished, His work is done. "I have finished the work Thou gavest Me to do." What was our Lord's work and mission? Not merely to show the malignity of sin, to prove the sanctity of love, but to furnish means for the endurance, persistence, final perseverance of love.

The Church is a finished work. In it you will find all that is needed to ensure your love against the shipwreck of faith, or the loss of hope; which are sail and rudder of that frail vessel, whose cargo is love. You who are Catholics frequent the Sacraments; make your religion a reality, and you will abide in God's love. Love can only feed on love. "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh My blood *abideth* in Me, and I in him." However and wherever others may compete for your heart's best treasure, hear always and everywhere the piteously pleading Voice calling to you from the Cross: "Abide in My love."

Be thorough-hearted Catholics; think the mind of the Church, do the bidding

of the Church, promote the interests of the Church, and you will abide now and for ever and evermore in the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. For you nothing else really matters. You who are with us, though not of us, remember these words of the Sculptor-Poet:

"That is not love whose tyranny is held
In loveliness which every moment dies,
Which, like the face it worships fades away;
True love is that which the pure heart hath known,
Which alters not with time or death's decay,
Yielding on earth earnest of Paradise."

Seventh Word.

"Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit."—St Luke xxiii, 46.

Our dear and blessed Lord, St Paul reminds us, was like us in all things with the exception of sin. Readily we may realise how, like us, He suffered from the heat and the cold, from hunger and thirst, from fatigue and weariness; how keenly His fine nature suffered from the slights, insults, the misunderstandings and misinterpretations of the people among whom "He went about doing good."

There is no difficulty in picturing to our minds all these mental tortures and heart-aches to which Jesus was subject as man, but what is most difficult to bring home to ourselves is that He could have shared in that terrible loneliness, that state of utter alienation, separation, apartness from everybody and everything which people feel who have lost,

and lost for all time a child, a husband, a friend. I refer to that agony which I can only compare with what a child experiences when, having incurred the displeasure of its mother, it is sent away, and then hides itself in some dark room, where sitting with head buried in its lap it sobs itself sick. I have known strong and resolute men in the agony of a great grief, thus play the child. "And David sobbed," and Peter too.

But what is the cry of lamentation piercing the very clouds of heaven that comes from one who feels he is abandoned by *God*! May we be spared this paralysing agony! It is the torture of the damned. No words can describe the mere facial expression of one who is thus beside himself, and yet not insane.

A poor half-witted orphan boy whom I had known in the North, lost his situation, and when there seemed no hope of securing one there, he walked to London, being helped along the road by fellow tramps. He came to me, and when shall I forget the tears in his eyes, the tears in his voice, the look of blank despair and the vacant stare as kneeling he clutched hold of me to save him from he knew not what.

Our Lord went through the most terrible desolation; we heard His cry to His God when undergoing it, asking: "Why hast Thou forsaken Me?" With that piteous cry ringing like an alarm bell in the towers of our souls, we learn to bear all lesser griefs, knowing Him. For, alas!

"Deep grief is not a past event,
It is a *life*, a *state*.
Which *habit* makes more terrible,
And age more desolate.
But am I comfortless? Oh, no!
Jesus this pathway trod,
And deeper in my soul than grief
Art thou, my Lord, my God.
Dear Lord, in all *our* loneliest pain
Thou hast the largest share,
And that which is unbearable
'Tis Thine, not ours to bear."

No word taken from any other scene in the life of three and thirty years tells us so forcibly as the cry on the Cross what our Lord's manhood meant, what it brought to Him as the Man of Sorrows, the Victim of sin.

Had this cry of Christ forsaken been our Lord's last spoken word from the Cross, then some troubled souls perhaps, might have been at a loss as to how to account for it. But the fourth word

must be interpreted by the seventh and last word. The strong prayer: "Father into Thy hands I commend My spirit" is the complement, the co-relative of that agonizing cry which, apart from the context and torn from the scene where it was uttered, might puzzle or shock some souls.

"Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." Oh the comfort of it, the consolation of it! Our Lord began his sermon of seven words by addressing His Father, and He closes His discourse, which ends only with His death, by again speaking, praying so confidingly to His Father. Although Jesus our Lord went through the agony of *feeling* what it is to be forsaken of God, yet He did not lose conscious hold of His absolute reliance on His Father's perfect knowledge and perfect love of Him. And so when the end comes, and He knows His mission to be fulfilled, Jesus lifts His eyes to Heaven, and with a loud voice proclaims that now He is going Home, to His Father, to whose loving care He commits His human soul unconditionally.

In this seventh and last word spoken by our dying Saviour we have epito-

mised all that our dear Master wants to teach us. It supplies us with a motto, a text which sums up every previous sermon, warning, exhortation. It bids us yield childlike, clinging trust to God—so that whenever and wheresoever death shall find us, it shall find us giving up our whole being with unconditional surrender into the hands of Him who made us, Who saves us, because He knows and loves us.

> "For thou hast made this wondrous soul
> All for Thyself alone;
> Oh, send Thy sweet, transforming grace,
> And make it all Thy own."

What did the perfect Man want most of all from His fellow men; what did He most eloquently plead for, and what does He still continue to beseech even you and me to give Him? It is an intelligent love, a love based on our knowledge of Him; a knowledge which again is fed on our love of Him. To be understood by men, and to be loved by them, this is our Lord's urgent entreaty.

Some men there are now who profess to want Christianity without Christ, who want to tear from their context choice passages from the Sermon on the Mount,

but they do not want any introduction to Christ's teaching about the Incarnation, the Atonement, or the Resurrection. "We want no dogma, but a Christianity freed of all such stuff: dogma is not religion: we want, we need a Christianity which teaches us what to do. It is conduct that the world asks for." Well, you cannot start Christianity properly so-called without the most tremendous dogma—belief in Divinity of Christ; and before thinking of what you ought *to do*, find out what you *must be*. Man before God is not what he *does* but what he *is*; character first and conduct will follow. Know what to be and you will soon learn what to do, and how to do it. Become Christ-like by your knowledge and love of Him, and then your conduct and doing will be Christ-like. To be Christ-like is to be a Christian—for Christianity is Christ, and Christ is Christianity! "Know Christ and Him Crucified," and you will have no more difficulty than St Paul had in believing all the teaching of Christ.

If all men really knew Christ, they would all inevitably become Catholics.

And now, after this digression, let me come back to our main issue. I want you to lay hold of this vital and vitalising

truth, that the great need of every human being is to love someone who knows him and loves him completely. The child finds this cry of its soul answered in, and satisfied by, its mother. The child believes that its mother is all knowledge, all power, and all love. Let the rain patter against the window panes, let the wind scream like a wounded thing, let the thunder crash and the lightning flash and all nature rise up to shatter the home to ruins, yet will the child feel quite safe so long as its head is smothered in its mother's lap, and her dear hands are sheltering it from all danger. Alas! when the child grows into a man, then comes the cruel change. He begins to find there is perhaps no human being who completely understands him. Occasions occur when even those most closely allied to each other are forced to confess they have been misunderstood. How often is not this dialogue heard between those bound by love-ties to each other: "If you only knew me better, you would love me more:" "But you can't sympathise because you can't understand:" "If only you had more insight you would know what I mean:" "If you knew what I suffer you would not say so;" "If you

really loved me you could never have said, have done so."

There is not one in a million who finds in another human being the key to the wards in the lock of his heart. When that discovery is made, if ever it is, then you have a soul-union between friends which I can describe only by calling it a soul-marriage. It is an indissoluble, unchanging, and indestructible friendship, which no power can tear asunder. "It is for ever."

I say rarely indeed is such a friendship as I have described to be found on this fickle planet. However, let this be your supreme comfort that there is One, just One Who does both know and love each one of you with a perfect insight and a perfect affection. It was the union of these two talents that created and constituted the influence and the charm of Jesus Christ. It was the recognition of this two-fold magic power in our Lord that drew the publican and the sinner, the rich and the poor, the strong and the sick, the young and the old to Him. Only to see Him is to realise that there at last, is one Who knows all, and Who cares for me in spite of my past, Who pities me, nay loves.

Was it not something like this that made "the whole world," as our Lord's enemies said, "go after Him."

Do you think Magdalen would have found her soul's centre at His Blessed Feet but for the sense that He understood all about her, and could love her in spite of it?

Or do you suppose the penitent thief would have turned with all his heart to our Lord if he had not felt sure? "*He* knows and *He* will pity me."

Take one scene more; perhaps the most touching as it is one of the most instructive in the whole Gospel story. It is after that meal prepared by our Lord's own hands for the dear fishermen who had laboured all the night and caught nothing. Peter was most likely thinking: "Oh how wonderful He is! I do wish I had not been so weak and cowardly as to have denied Him." Just then our divine Lord comes near to Peter, and putting His arm about him, draws him aside. See with what tenderness He looks inquiringly into the penitent's face, and as He does so He softly asks him: "Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me?" Three times does our Lord repeat the question, and as many times

does Blessed Peter repeat the answer: "Yea, Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee." Watch: big hot tears are coursing down the furrowed cheeks of the penitent man, but yet he feels this to be the very happiest moment in all his life. How grateful he is for this precious opportunity of telling his beloved Master that he must have been mad when he denied Him, that it was not his real self: "Oh *Thou* knowest, because Thou knowest all things: Thou knowest then this that I do love Thee." Poor Peter would not perhaps have ventured to make this profession of love of his Master before the other disciples, for they with their shallow knowledge and partial judgments might have taunted him, and tossed back into his choking throat the story of the awful night; but now that he has our Lord all to himself, he can just weep his sad bosom empty, and give his sorrow and love, and trust, living words, because "He knows, He knows, He knows all things."

Some one among you may ask me: "Seeing that our dear Lord knew of the love in Simon Peter's heart, why did He keep on asking him for the external profession of it?" Jesus asks Peter to tell

Him again and again in so many words of his love for Him because He is human as well as divine; in other words because Jesus Christ is all Heart, and the heart loves to hear the love once uttered expressed again and again.

Trust, then, trust in our Lord's love of us, is what alone can satisfy Jesus Christ, and it alone can satisfy the disciples of Jesus Christ. It is the last lesson taught from the Cross. Let us learn this lesson and never forget it. Never again say: "I am tortured by all my past sins, and I feel sure they can't be forgiven." Confide, trust, and do not say: "I dare not go to Holy Communion, because I am not sure whether the priest realised the actual state of my soul." Confide, trust, nor must you say: "I am so troubled about my faith that I am not sure that I believe at all." Confide, trust. When times are worst, say not: "It is no use my going to confession, for I am almost sure to fall back again." Confide, trust. Above all things say not: "I can't believe in hell, for if there is a hell I am sure to be lost." Confide. Trust.

Like Magdalen, like Dismas, like Peter, trust in Him Who knoweth all things, Who knows that in spite of many

weaknesses and follies we really do wish to love and to please Him.

And now, my Catholic brethren, do not be so wholly preoccupied with your own spiritual concerns as to forget your duty and your mission to others who are fighting the battle of faith and loyalty. Observe, Jesus did not say to Simon Peter: "Spend the remainder of your life in seclusion, weeping over the past." But what he said came to this: "If you do really love Me, go forth and tell others of this love, feed them on it, both lambs and sheep, begin in your own home, and go thence into all the land about and let all mankind know that they may put their trust in Me—yes, in life and in death."

Look up, He is dying and over the Cross in letters of gold and blood see: "Greater love than this no man hath."

And now one word to you who live for this world, to you who all your lives have shirked the story of the Passion, who have avoided Calvary and have echoed Peter's words (yet not Peter's love) on Thabor; "It is good for us to be here," let me ask, is this terrible drama, that we have been witnessing during the past Three Hours, nothing

to you? Nay, I will ask you, has it not been enacted more especially for you who have drunk down sin like water, and have trampled on the Blood of the Innocent One? "It is good for you to be *here*." You have listened too long to the voice of the charmer and to the cry of the sophist bidding you to toss aside the thought of your sins, assuring you that there is no harm in what is called sin, that no one can help committing sin, that the pain which springs from it is in no sense the penalty of sin, that the remorse which sickens you is not the guilt attaching to sin, but only a pain which with health you will outgrow or at worst a ghost which with resolution may be laid to rest.

These views about sin and its consequences may find their way into the club-room, the boudoir, may sound very well in the salon and drawing-room, but they are out of place in Gethsemane and on Calvary. Here, as on the battlefield, we seldom meet the agnostic and the secularist. Standing beside the Crucified you are in the presence of One about Whom you cannot be indifferent; you are beside the death-bed of One Whom you must be for or against. He hath said it, "Who is not with Me is against

Me. He that soweth not, scattereth." Fall into your right place; come, I say, take up your stand beside Gestas on the left of your Saviour, or draw nigh to the Blessed Mother on His right near Dismas. I charge you to proclaim here and now either your treachery or loyalty. I care not what may have been your past, whether as bad as the repentant or worse than the unrepentant thief, what I do demand is that you shall declare before the Sacred Head is bowed in death what you are going to be from henceforth and for ever. Oh! do not for a moment hesitate, but to our knees let us sink with hearts humbled and contrite praying, "Lord, remember me." "Remember me, but forget my sins. Pardon me, and blot out my iniquities. Create a clean and humble heart within me." "Remember me, and send into my soul the stream of Thy love, that I may never part from Thee."

Oh! when the knees stumble on the mountain, and the dew is drunk up by the sun, "before the silver cord is broken, and the golden fillet shrink back, and the pitcher be crushed at the fountain, and the wheel be broken at the the cistern," then "Remember me." Yes, in that last

tremendous moment when the mind darkens and the will grows feeble and the heart is faint; when the weak hands clutch at airy nothings, when the ashy lips are parted and the glassy eyes are dim, and the cold sweat stands out upon the stricken frame, and the ears are deaf to the voice that had once been music to the heart; Oh! then when this world with its many ties and many lies is passing away like a tale nearly told, when the life of shadows is too quickly changing into the life of realities, when my past excuses for indulgence in sin shall, in the fierce light of divine truth, shrivel up into nothingness, and I shall be left tossing on a bed of pain, being forced to gaze into the face of my real self and my real past; O Jesus, Saviour, "Remember me." Cast me not away, but bid me come to Thee in Paradise. O Father Eternal, look not on me with such a record to my past, but "look upon the Face of Thy Christ:"

"Look, Father, look on His anointed Face,
And only look on me as found in Him;
Look not on my misusings of Thy grace,
My prayers so languid, my faith so dim;
For lo! between my sins and their reward
I set the Passion of Thy Son, our Lord."

SCENE VIII

CHRIST RISEN FROM THE DEAD

CHRIST RISEN FROM THE DEAD.

"If ye be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is."—Epistle of St Paul to the Colossians iii, 1.

We are living in a strangely contradictory age — an age in which some would-be Christians seem to have no more difficulty than have politicians in making statements that are destructive of one another. For instance we all know of those who, while professing to be followers of our Lord, deny His Virgin Birth as well as His Resurrection.

With the Apostles' Creed proclaiming that our Lord suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried, and that on the third day He rose again from the dead, it does seem a little inconsistent in those who claim Apostolic Succession to deny Articles of Faith which the Apostles themselves publicly professed. For many hundreds of years the physical Resurrection of our Lord

has been taken to account for the moral resurrection of Society.

But now we have reached a stage on life's journey when not a few persons outside the Catholic Church argue that if Christ did rise from the grave, clearly He never died on the Cross; whereas if He did actually die on the Cross, then of course He never rose from the grave. And they add as if speaking of a fact about which there could be no dispute. "Miracles, you know, do not happen."

Starting enquiry with the denial of the miraculous, it is hardly likely that our friends could hope to arrive at any argument that would satisfy them of the objective reality of our Blessed Lord's risen life. These higher critics, after investigating the historical evidence found in the Gospels, in the Acts, and in the Epistles of St Paul, for the reality of the Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, contend they have arrived at the conclusion that there is no objective evidence at all, for what all right-minded Christians accept as shown satisfactorily at once by historical and by traditional evidence. I too find myself compelled to differ from these Biblical critics, for unlike them I have discovered few facts

of history so completely and so abundantly proved as the Death and Resurrection of our Lord.

Christianity, or the religion established by Jesus Christ, has come down to us through the ages, and has appealed to the sixty generations that have come and gone during that period, with such singular force and efficacy, just because it *is* the religion of our Crucified and Glorified Saviour risen from the dead.

Not for a moment do I contend that these great facts are the solitary proofs of the Divinity of Christ, but they are the historical facts to which He Himself pointed as to the last links in a long chain of evidence, by which He wished the truth of His tremendous claims to be finally tested.

Hence His Apostle could write to the Corinthians: "If Christ be not risen from the dead, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain."

In other words, I take it, if Christ did not really die on the Cross and rise again from the grave, then Christianity with all its matchless achievements in all departments of life during the past two thousand years, must be set down as the outcome not of fact, but of fraud,

not of supernatural truth, but of a diabolical lie. Pause for a moment and ask yourselves, what was the moral state of Society before the Church was planted by our risen Saviour? Never perhaps in the history of our race was there such a dark chapter to record. Poets I know called it the Golden Age. If it was golden at all it was so only because men more than ever fell down in worship before the Golden Calf, and all that ministers to the mammon of unrighteousness. It was a time when the human heart was like a dried-up spring, with no pure stream of love to flow forth from it for the regeneration of mankind; it was a time when, as the Apostle reminds us, men and women were without natural affections, when such children as did happen to be born to them were "disobedient with their hearts darkened."

This we are assured by historians and satirists was the state of things in Society when our Lord moved to and fro in the cradle-land of Christianity, "going about doing good."

Is it an exaggeration to say that Society was expiring of moral suicide when there appeared beside her deathbed, the Risen Saviour? He and none

other stood over against her, and at the sound of His Voice new life seemed to thrill through her entire being. Presently Europe rose to her feet, the films fell from her eyes, she gazed into the Face of Him Who had died and risen again, and recognising Him to be her divine Saviour, she exclaimed, "Too late have I known Thee, O Ancient Truth, too late have I loved Thee, O Thou Supreme Beauty."

I scarcely need remind you who live in a land covered with Cathedrals, Minsters and Abbeys, of what Christianity did for more than a thousand years in our Fatherland and in Western Europe. With no halting feet she made progress along the many ways of life, scattering the largesse not merely of her heavenly smile, of her encouraging word, but inspiring the whole wide world about her with the enthusiasm of a people, who with Christ were risen from the dead.

I cannot pretend, within the limits of an Easter day discourse, to do more than remind you of what Europe was before, and what she became afterwards. because of her belief in the reality of the objective resurrection of Christ our Saviour.

We are told that there are none who are so blind as those who will not see. I fear that those who say they cannot accept the Resurrection would be nearer the truth were they to say "We will not accept it." Anyhow, what they set down as accounting for our belief in it is passing strange.

For a moment bear with me while I remind you on the one hand of the non-Death Theory, and on the other of the Vision Theory, which men have trumped up to account for Europe's belief in our Risen Saviour. The non-Death Theory, which Schleiermacher, Paul of Heidelberg, Huxley, and others have made their own, contends that, as some men of sound and temperate habits of life have been known to survive the pains of crucifixion, so as a matter of fact our Lord did not really die but only swooned away, gradually recovering, till finally He was able to get away to Galilee among His disciples, who put about the story that He had actually risen from the dead.

That this really happened in the case of Jesus Christ was, we are told by these critics, absolutely clear, for did not Pilate himself express surprise when he was asked for the Sacred Body of our Lord?

The supporters of this theory choose to forget to add that the Roman Governor according to St Mark, in whom they put such absolute reliance, refused to allow the body of Christ to be taken for burial, until he himself was satisfied by the centurion about the reality of His death.

That men have been known in past history to recover from the effects of crucifixion is certain enough, but then they had been spared tortures such as were inflicted on our Lord before He reached Calvary; besides this, their wounds were attended to, they were properly nursed and cared for, most assuredly they were not buried, nor suffocated in a sepulchre by the fumes of a hundred pounds weight of aloes and other spices, nor are we asked to believe that they walked a three day's journey on feet that had been pierced by great rough nails. Besides these negative proofs of the reality of our Lord's death, let me remind you of some of those positive proofs of it; for instance, St Mark states categorically that "He gave up the Ghost." Then there is the testimony of the soldier who pierced His Side, not to mention the testimony of Joseph of Arimathea, of the Chief Priests who set

their seal upon the grave, of the soldiers who mounted guard, of His friends, nay of his Mother herself. If further witnesses are needed, there is St Paul, whom, for reasons best known to himself, Professor Huxley called "a strange man."

Surely I have put enough of the non-Death Theory before you to make it clear that I am justified in calling it a ridiculous and monstrous theory, a libel on history, and an outrage on common sense.

Let us now give a moment's consideration to the so-called Vision Theory which allows that Jesus Christ really died and was buried, but denies that He really rose from the dead. Strauss, Renan and many others have stood sponsors to this theory, in order to account for the world-wide belief in the Resurrection of our Divine Lord. The scoffing French infidel has told his readers that there was indeed a subjective but not an objective resurrection. He assures us that the fervent and impetuous Magdalen mistaking the gardener for Christ at once yielded to him her love and adoration, and that she then went forth to the disciples and succeeded in persuading them to believe in the reality of the event, which they themselves were so

anxious to preach before the world—the Resurrection.

It seems to me a little unfortunate that the French maker of history should so entirely have forgotten that in the Sacred Record we are told that which did happen is not what he asserts, but in other words that instead of mistaking the gardener for Jesus the Magdalen took Jesus for the gardener.

Perhaps the explanation of the matter is that the French romancer reads his Bible as witches are said to read the "Our Father," backwards. Also if my memory serves me right I think we are told in the Sacred page that the disciples instead of being persuaded by the Magdalen of the Resurrection treated her account of it as "an idle tale."

Furthermore we are reminded in the New Testament not of the credulity, but on the contrary of the want of real faith, of slowness on the part of the Apostles to believe in their Master's Resurrection.

Need I recall to your memory our Lord's gentle reprimand to the two disciples at Emmaus, and to the rest of the Apostles, notably to Thomas Didymus, who, not content with disbelieving it, so far forgot himself as to lay down the

conditions upon the fulfilment of which he would consent to yield assent to the reality of it?

Doubtless some higher critics will tell me that what is written by Matthew, Luke and John is not worth the paper on which the story is told. Let it be as they say, but even with these three shut out of court as unworthy witnesses, there still remain Mark and Paul who insist upon having a hearing. These two last witnesses vouch for the reality of our Lord's Resurrection in language quite as clear and definite as do the other three. To my thinking the only satisfactory way of showing there was no real Resurrection of our Lord from the dead will be to close the book of the Four Gospels, to put aside the four Pauline Epistles, and to ignore all history. Thank God, some of us can still proclaim with holy Job "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and in the last day I shall rise out of the earth, and I shall be clothed again with my skin, and in my flesh I shall see my God."

If you will study the Vision Theory you will discover it to be a contention not less ridiculous and monstrous than the non-Death Theory itself.

And now let me remind you that, what our Risen Lord did for moribund Society in a day gone by, He is prepared to do even now. But before He can become the Saviour of Modern Society it must correct a good many of its prevailing ideas. For instance, the idea that by becoming more cultured a man will become necessarily better or, in other words, that in proportion as he advances in culture he will make progress in virtue, is nonsense. In these brave words we find formulated one of the most specious maxims of the present day; it is the special product of a century which boasts that it is nothing if not scientific.

Without any hesitation at all I readily grant that we are living in an age of scientific culture. The scientist with his magic wand has struck the rock of knowledge and the waters of truth have poured forth so freely, that even the shoeless child in the street may slake its thirst to know the mysteries of nature for the asking.

But while willing enough to allow that not a little has been done to make the present generation wiser in many things than people were, say a century ago, I am not disposed to proclaim that the

present generation has become in the same proportion morally better.

Between knowledge and virtue there is not only no indissoluble union, but not even any necessary contact. On the contrary, between knowing and doing I seem to see yawning before me a deep and awful chasm, so that to the Knowledge School which so loudly proclaims that by becoming scientifically wiser, the present generation must become morally better, I fling back the retort of one of the profoundest thinkers of our time and I declare that maxim to be one of the veriest pretences that ever Sophist or Mountebank presented to a gaping auditory.

What I want this morning to bring home to you, is the very important truth that there are two kinds of knowledge which we must be careful to distinguish from each other, when we are speaking of knowledge in relation to human culture and moral progress. There is the knowledge of things and there is the knowledge of persons. Let us for a moment pause to note their distinctive attributes. The knowledge of things, phenomena, and of their laws teaches a man, if only he will make use

of nature's output to *do* better physically, materially; whereas the knowledge of persons, of their thoughts and actions helps us, if we have good will to *become* better morally, spiritually. Hence knowledge of things, if well used contributes in no small degree to promote the material and social well-being of the community; whereas the knowledge of persons when turned to good account advances its religious and spiritual welfare. This being so, what I want to point out to the Knowledge School is this, that the triumphs which it has to record, and the victories which it proclaims are triumphs and victories over matter and not over man. It is a triumph to be able to seize hold of the spirit of water, yoke it to our chariot wheels, forcing it like a captive to carry our ventures and even our persons to the uttermost parts of the earth; it is a marvel that without difficulty we may lasso the viewless electricity, tame it to our bidding, and train it to fetch and carry like a thing endowed with life: it is astounding that easily as said we can lay hold of impalpable light itself, imprison it in a dark and lonely cell, and compel its mysterious hand not only to draw

but even to paint and fix, with permanence, whatever our trivial fancy may set before it as a model.

These indeed are some of the wonderful achievements of our wonderful day of life, and if you will, they show that we have discovered the key to some of the secrets of nature, but they do not prove that we have found the way into the hidden places of the heart of man. Between things and persons keep the essential distinction. I tell you that in the laboratory I can find nothing to neutralize the poison of human passion, in the observatory nothing to correct the aberrations of the soul's light, in the surgery nothing to heal the wounds or even to mitigate the pains of an aching or a broken heart. Scientific culture is without moral sense. The key which she holds in her hand is one which will turn as readily in the wards of a lock, shutting from view a chamber of horrors, as it will unfasten the gate leading to a sanctuary of prayer. In a word, knowledge is like a two-edged sword which depends entirely, for the noble or ignoble uses to which it will be put, upon the character of him who wields it.

Someone here present may feel dis-

posed to object that true knowledge of nature ought to lead to a knowledge of nature's God. I grant you that that is its sublime mission.

> " And not alone the fairest flower ;
> The merest grass
> Along the roadside where you pass,
> The lichen and moss and sturdy weed,
> Tell of His love Who sends the dew,
> The rain and sunshine too,
> To nourish one small seed."

This is all true and beautiful and it ought to make us feel very much ashamed of ourselves for not having learnt from the mirror of nature, in which God reflects Himself, more about God Himself. But I still maintain that, were we to learn from nature not some but all the lessons in her repertoire, our lives would not even then necessarily be improved spiritually.

No, as men are not changed from viciousness to virtue by examining shells under a glass case, nor by trying acids in test tubes, nor by labelling butterflies stuck on pins, so neither are they made humble and contrite by cultivating orchids or discovering stars, or inventing machinery.

And now, after having told you what knowledge of Things cannot, let me remind you what knowledge of Persons

can do. If it is not from the microscope, nor from the magnet, not from the telescope, nor from any other scientific instrument that man learns how to change his heart and to stimulate the pulsations of his spiritual life, it is in the Crucifix that he reads in letters of blood written on Human Flesh the one great Love Story which ought to convert him from a sinner into a saint. "Example" as has been remarked by a modern writer "is the school of mankind, and they will learn in no other." Men and women may go to your Academies, to your Universities, to your Schools of Science, you may teach them all the arts of peace and war, and if they are industrious as well as capable they will most probably succeed in making a name and taking their right place as citizens of this world, but they may quite possibly make no name at all and find no place whatever in the world to come. Knowledge of things, as I have already said, being a weapon as easily wielded by a bad as by a good man. Hence the prayer of the poet.

> "Let knowledge grow from more to more,
> But more of reverence in us dwell."

It is not knowledge then of even the

highest things that is going to save Society, but the knowledge of the Highest Person, Jesus Christ, Who came not to teach us to love His things, but to love Himself.

There is no other name under heaven but His whereby man must be saved. He not only can, but will save us, if only we will believe in Him and trust Him, nothing doubting.

For a Christian community living in a Christian land, if Christ be not the Exemplar, there is none at all for them. Other leaders may capture the mind, man's seat of thought, or subjugate the will, his seat of action, but Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ only can captivate the heart, man's seat of love, and until His love is taken and held, man is in reality without a leader, like a planet without a pathway or a centre to control its orbit and lend it light and heat.

If Society to-day is, as we see it is, on the down grade, may not the real reason of it be that in its haste to get rich, to pluck at every forbidden fruit, and to drink of every poisoned well, it has well-nigh lost sight of the "most beautiful of the sons of men," Jesus Christ, God in the Flesh? May it not be that Modern Society has

fallen in love with our Lord's things instead of His Person, that in its short-sightedness it has mistaken the gifts of the Giver for the Giver of the gifts.

One thing is certain and it is this, that "a new theology" is being offered to a Christian people, which in reality is no theology at all, and I say that the very fact of its being possible, to propound such doctrine in a land which for centuries upon centuries has had no Leader, no Exemplar but Jesus Christ, is itself an undeniable proof of England's want at this moment of belief in the objective reality of the Resurrection of Christ.

Return, I say, to your true Teacher, to your first Leader, to your only Exemplar. Once more study Him—the beauty of His Person, the beauty of His mind and of His teaching, the beauty of His Heart and of His Love, the beauty of His will and of His action, in other words the beauty of His character, and you will be forced to acknowledge with St Peter that He is the Christ, the Son of God, that He has the words of eternal life; while with St Paul you will once more proclaim your profession of faith, to know nothing but Christ Who suffered under Pontius Pilate, was dead and buried, and

on the third day rose from the dead. He and He alone, Who is our Liberator, shall be our Exemplar. Let us renew all things in Christ Jesus our Lord, saying each one of us from the heart: "I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Until we have renewed our baptismal vows and have given our Lord His right place in our hearts, making his Will our supreme pleasure, we can never be altogether sure in times of trial of our loyalty to His claims. We are living in a day when those claims are being called in question, and when the fundamental doctrines of Christianity are being regarded as anachronisms.

We are told that "during the last thirty years the presentation of religious truth has had to meet new needs, to explain new problems, to deal with new difficulties. This indeed is the case, and it may be truly said that the Protestant Churches have in a great measure proved unequal to this demand. The advance of criticism during these days has doubt-

less dethroned the Bible from the position it held at the Reformation. The documents of which it is composed are held to be of very different degrees of authenticity, and to have no connexion among themselves beyond that which belongs to any common literature. In one sense Biblical study has been greatly aided by this decomposition of one book into many, but its authoritative character as an infallible guide of human belief and human conduct has disappeared in the process. In England, indeed, this revolution has met with far more vigorous resistance than elsewhere. Here 'Orthodox' Nonconformity is still a living force, and it is greatly busying itself with the discovery of a new foundation on which to rebuild the old truths in their old security. But in Germany and in America, the two chief seats of Protestant Theology, neither the need nor the possibility of any such discovery seems to be recognised."

From what we read and from what we hear, and indeed from what we see going on around us, it would appear that the Bible and the Bible only as a Rule of Faith is not altogether equal to the task of holding its own in presence of adverse

criticism. But then the Master never told us to make any such book our Rule of Faith; on the contrary He has set up a Living Organism, which is an infallible guide in matters theological for all His followers. He Himself is as intimately with us now as He was with His Apostles in a day gone by. He is—

> "Closer to us than breathing,
> Nearer than hands and feet."

From the Church and from none other we receive the Books of Revelation, and it is her province and hers only to interpret their meaning.

We, who are her children, fear no revelations of Biblical critics. We know that truth can never contradict truth, and consequently we welcome true knowledge no matter from what source it may be drawn.

Others may consider Christianity to be a mere passing phase in the history of evolution, but we know that we have heard the last word of Revelation, and that the Church of Christ will continue till the end of time to unfold its meaning more explicitly, defining her dogmatic definitions in terms precise, clear and unmistakable. She has nothing to re-

state; she stands by all her previous utterances, and she has said the last word about the Virgin Birth as well as about the Resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

In the written word of the Gospel and in the living word of the Church, we find all that we need know about our Lord and His teaching, to make it clear to us what we must *be*, and what we must *do*, to make our lives in His sight a splendid success.

What more, in the name of heaven, let me ask, can we want? Why I was going to say that so close has been our intimacy with Him from very childhood that, if the Gospel narrative with the Church herself were by any impossibility to cease to be, we should still know "the mind of Christ," and what to do to please Him.

Can there be any higher mission than this for the most ambitious among us? It is the vocation itself of the heroes and heroines of Christianity—the Saints.

Tell me, how did they come to fight against flesh and blood, conquering themselves, robbing no man of his Faith, and no woman of her Morals, but on the

contrary drawing, or else driving all coming under their influence to the embraces of our dear and blessed Lord? The victory over themselves and others was due, as our Lord reminds us, to their Faith. "This is the Victory which overcometh the world, your Faith." If we want, like them, to leave this world somewhat better for having passed through it, then, like them, we must cultivate a child-like, closely-clinging, cheerful faith in Jesus Christ, our Lord. Here to-day not only is Society losing its Faith with its Morals, but we are assured by those who know that "there is no country in the world which at the present moment presents in the same degree the features of unrest, longing for change, impecuniosity and enconomic wastefulness among all classes" as our own.

It is not the God of Hegel, or of Kant, or of Eddy, nor is it the Christ of the Christian Scientists or the New Theologists who can cure Society of the sickness which is actually sapping its strength, ruining its life.

There is one God only Who can answer the inquisitive mind, and calm the stormy heart of man, and His Name

is Jesus Christ, the Man-God, Who born of the Virgin Mary, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and rose again from the dead.

What in a day now long fled this Heavenly Physician did for this dear, dear land, even England, He can do again. What He did in Alban our Martyr, in Edward our King, in Fisher our Bishop, in More our Chancellor, given the like dispositions, He can do no less in us, their fellow-countrymen.

It is not, I repeat, our Lord God Who is changed, but we ourselves. "Jesus Christ is yesterday, to-day, and the same for ever." Modernity has nothing new to teach us about Him. Let it keep its self-evolved Gospel to itself. We need none of it. The advice it offers to Christ's Bride, the Church, is borrowed from those who insulted Christ Himself when bleeding, dying on the Cross. Let these uncertificated teachers break their idols to pieces, and come, cap in hand, to the Church not with the view of teaching her, but on the contrary of learning from her the mind of the Master.

I invite them to come, without delay, to the feet of the Master Himself and to

cry out to Him, in the dust beneath their feet; "Lord, what wilt Thou have us to do?"

Let Modernity, I say, have done with posing as the intellectual giant in His presence; let it shake off the cap and bells of its fool-like self-conceit, and acknowledge itself to be but a child with its lessons to learn in the School of Christ. Let us one and all remember the word: "unless you become as little children." For God's sake let us be childlike in the Church or else quit it.

Here and now, as the "very least of His little ones," we ourselves will sink to our knees around our blessed Mother, on whose open hands, resting on her lap, are the little dimpled feet of the divine Child, Whose arms are fastened round her neck as He smothers her lovely face with His baby kisses.

Let our ambition be to worship this Child, and our privilege be to do His bidding, running His errands like love-slaves, "bought at a great price."

Servants, we are told, sometimes forget their position. Let us not forget ours. Be keener to learn than to teach,

readier to obey than to command, prompter to take than to give advice.

Whatever be the mission of others, let our work be not to teach the Church but to put ourselves right—to say our prayers; to go to the Sacraments; to check our appetites; to pursue good works; to be gentle at home and cheerful abroad; to be hurtful to none and helpful to all; to be humble and pure, brave and true. Behold here some of the characteristics of the servants of Christ! Be it our ambition, as "good and faithful servants," to excel in these humbler duties, leaving the guidance of the Church herself in the hands of the Master of the Household.

So let us struggle to live on as serving men, strong in Faith, and stronger still in Love, till the Master Himself, in His own good time, shall ring us up from this land of work and worry to His Home beyond the stars:

> "Where the wicked cease from troubling
> And the weary are at rest."

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